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ABSTRACT

Nearly one in three of America's school-age children attend public schools in rural areas or small towns, and more than one in six go to school in the very smallest communities. These children, their schools, and their communities matter, and they deserve more consideration than they get in the national debate over education policy. This report analyzes descriptive data about the rural schools serving the 21 percent of our students in communities of under 2,500. It uses data collected in 1999-2001 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Census Bureau. Since NCES recently changed its "locale codes," data in this and a 2000 report are not comparable. Data are provided for each state on 7 indicators of the importance and scope of rural education and 12 indicators of the urgency of conditions faced by rural schools and communities. "Importance" indicators cover rural population and school demography. "Urgency" indicators cover teacher salaries; students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch; student-teacher ratio; computer use; percentages of expenditures on administration, instruction, and transportation; per capita income; parental support; students per grade; and declining enrollments. The 19 indicators are discussed in detail, national averages are presented, and the states are ranked on each indicator and overall. Recommendations are made to state policymakers, and four indicators are noted as particularly important: low teacher salaries, low spending on school-level administration, high transportation costs, and limited computer access. (Contains many data tables and figures.) (SV)

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THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

WHY RURAL MATTERS 2003

The Continuing Need for Every State to Take Action on Rural Education

by
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ADM
THE NATURE OF WHAT'S TO COME

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THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

The Rural School and Community Trust (Rural Trust) is the premier national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving rural communities. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging rural places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, advocates for appropriate state educational policies, and addresses the critical issue of funding for rural schools.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

  - The Data
  - Gauging Rural Education in the 50 States
  - Results
  - Indicators of Importance and Urgency

Maps of State Rankings 15

State-by-State Results (alphabetical by state) 23

  - How each state ranks on each of the importance and urgency gauges

Importance Indicators (rankings of all 50 states on each indicator) 75

Urgency Indicators (rankings of all 50 states on each indicator) 85

WHY RURAL MATTERS 2003:

The Continuing Need for Every State to Take Action on Rural Education

Nearly one in three of America's school-age children attend public schools in rural areas or small towns of fewer than 25,000, and more than one in six go to school in the very smallest communities, those with populations under 2,500. These children, their schools and their communities matter, and they deserve more consideration than they get in the national debate over education policy. This report presents and analyzes descriptive data about the rural schools that serve the 21 percent of our students who go to school in communities of under 2,500.

INTRODUCTION

Two years ago, we published *Why Rural Matters,* our first report analyzing the relative importance of rural education in each of the 50 states and documenting the urgency with which policymakers in each state should address the needs of rural schools and communities. This report updates and enlarges on that one.

In that first report, we concluded that talking and thinking seriously about rural education as a public policy issue is something that our society simply does not do very often.

We are pleased to say that rural education is a little less marginalized today than it was then, as these developments attest:

- Congress adopted a Rural Education Achievement Program to help rural districts compete for and make more effective use of federal grants. The program is woefully under-funded, and may be cut out completely, but for the first time in a long time rural education was the subject of significant debate in Congress.

- Three state Supreme Courts (Arkansas, Ohio, and Tennessee) have ruled their states' school finance systems unconstitutional because they fund rural schools inadequately and inequitably.

- New federal legislation includes provision for eight federal educational research and development centers on topics of national significance, including one for rural education.

- The National Center for Education Statistics made major improvements in the system by which it classifies schools by locale, making it possible to take a much sharper look at rural education. The NCES also established a significant rural education data section on its web site, called "Navigating Resources for Rural Schools."

- The National Association of State Boards of Education has assigned a staff person to focus on rural education policy.

- *Education Week,* America's leading education newspaper, has a reporter assigned to cover rural education who has filed numerous stories in the past two years on rural education policy issues. Major stories on rural schools are now a regular part of the coverage.

- The U.S. Department of Education has established an interdepartmental working group to focus on the problems of rural education.

- Leading national organizations as diverse as the Rural Sociological Society, Save the Children, the National School Boards Association, and the Council on Foundations have featured rural schools or rural children in major reports or events.

This attention is welcome. Rural America has gone unnoticed for too long. Its people are real, their problems are significant, their prospects are worthy.

While the scale of the schools in rural America is, on the whole, small compared to urban schools, the scope of the rural education enterprise is not. Forty-three percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities or small towns of fewer than 25,000 people, and 31 percent of the nation's children attend these schools.

Some of the communities at the upper end of this size interval would be considered by many to be small cities rather than small towns. So we adopt the most conservative definition of rural throughout this report, including only open country and those communities with fewer than 2,500 people. Using this stringent definition, nearly one-third of America's public schools are in rural places, and more than 21 percent of our public school students attend these schools. And in 20 states, mostly in the South, Appalachia, Northern New England, and the Great Plains, more than 30 percent of the students go to school in these most rural communities.

Forty-three percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities or small towns of fewer than 25,000 people, and 31 percent of the nation's children attend these schools.

Many of the children in these schools and communities are at risk of failing to get a quality education. Poverty is a central factor. In general, poverty rates in rural America remain as high as they are in urban centers, although poverty is not evenly distributed throughout rural America.

THE DATA

The data we use in this report are primarily from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which uses the Common Core of Data and the School and Staffing Survey to collect education data at the school, district, and state levels; and the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 Census of Population and Census of Local Governments. Both the Census and the NCES are widely accepted as sources of reliable data for both rigorous research and general analysis. Most of the data in this report are from the years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

Since our last report, the NCES has changed the way it defines "rural" and classifies schools according to locale, thus reflecting the growing importance and urgency of addressing the needs of rural education. For this reason, comparisons of the data contained in our previous report and data reported in this one are generally not advisable. In our previous report, we used data for rural schools and districts that had been designated as rural and assigned a "locale code" of 7 by NCES.[1] In general, this includes schools in open rural areas or in places with a population of fewer than 2,500. However, this excludes schools in even such small places if they lie within the boundaries of a county located in a Metropolitan Statistical Area (small cities) or a Central Metropolitan Statistical Area (big cities). There are many such schools, especially in small communities on the fringe of small cities. Furthermore, NCES based a school's location on its mailing address rather than its actual geographic location. A lot of small rural schools pick up their mail in nearby post offices located in larger towns.

In general, poverty rates in rural America remain as high as they are in urban centers.

In 1998-99, NCES established a new locale code (8) for schools in places of under 2,500 within Metropolitan Statistical Areas or Central Metropolitan Statistical Areas. This increased the percentage of schools considered rural from 24.6% in 1997-98 to 30.3% in 1999-2000 (19.2% of schools were rural and not in the urban fringe, while 11.1% were rural and in the urban fringe).

In addition, NCES now uses the actual geographic location rather than the mailing address as the basis for determining locale classification of a school. This increased the number of schools coded as "rural" from 6,879 to 9,844, an increase of 43 percent.

This more realistically portrays the extent to which rural education matters in each state. The data in this report are based on locale codes 7 and 8.

The net result of the changes in how data are collected and reported is that it appears that states are actually increasing the numbers of rural schools and students in rural schools. That isn't necessarily true. The declining enrollment figures should reflect the real story (although this is a challenge to do right now, since so many schools that are considered rural now were not considered rural schools five years ago.)

We only use data for regular schools, defined as public elementary/secondary schools that do not focus primarily on vocational, special, or alternative education. In the first report, we used the entire universe of rural schools. But there are more charter schools and special education schools now than when we prepared the first report, and many of these do not report on the same categories of data or have incomplete records. So we did not include them here.

GAUGING RURAL EDUCATION IN THE 50 STATES

This report is framed around two gauges. The "importance" gauge consists of seven statistical indicators of the relative scale and scope of rural education in the state. The "urgency" gauge consists of twelve statistical indicators of the conditions faced by students, teachers, leaders, and others in rural schools and communities, plus one of the indicators from the "importance" gauge, the percentage of rural population. Each indicator carries the same weight. For each of the indicators in each gauge, the states are ranked from "1" to "50" with 1 being the most important or most urgent, and 50 being least important or least urgent. For each gauge, the average ranking for all indicators is calculated to arrive at the overall rank for that gauge. The indicators used in the gauges are:

For each of the indicators in each gauge, the states are ranked from "1" to "50" with 1 being the most important or most urgent, and 50 being least important or least urgent.

Importance Gauge

- Percentage of state's population that is rural
- Number of rural people
- Percentage of public schools in rural areas
- Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools
- Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities
- Percentage of all students attending small rural schools
- Percentage of rural children in poverty

Urgency Gauge

- Average rural teacher's salary
- Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary
- Percentage of rural students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- Average rural student to teacher ratio
- Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class
- Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median
- Rural per capita income
- Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support
- Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation
- Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support
- Average number of students per grade
- Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000
- Percentage of state's population that is rural

Since the last report, we have added some new indicators and omitted some old ones. Due to reliability issues and the lack of new data, we have omitted indicators on the Education Climate Index, Internet access, and education levels of rural householders. We have added indicators on computer usage, school administration costs, rural per capita income, and transportation expenditures.

All of the state rankings were added and then divided by the number of indicators to give a cumulative ranking for each state. For each gauge, states were ordered by their average ranking and then divided into quartiles that generally describe the relative importance of rural education in that state compared to other states, and the relative urgency with which policymakers in the state should be concerned about rural education. The four quartiles ranging from least to most important are "Useful," "Important," "Very Important," and "Crucial." The four urgency quartiles are "Fair," "Serious," "Critical," and "Urgent" (See Tables 2 and 3).

Finally, we combined the two rankings and averaged them to arrive at an overall ranking, which we term the Rural Education Priority Gauge. Taking an average of the two gauge rankings rather than simply averaging the 19 cumulative indicators gives greater weight to the indicators in the "importance" gauge since its seven indicators get equal weight with the 13 indicators in the "urgency gauge."

RESULTS

The data for each state and the state rankings for each indicator are presented in the charts on pages 75-98. The results are summarized and discussed below. For comparison purposes, the national level data for each indicator is presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1. NATIONAL RURAL STATISTICS

IMPORTANCE GAUGE	U.S.
Percentage of state's population that is rural	21.0%
Number of rural people	59,061,367
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	31.3%
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.0%
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	18.6%
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.9%
Percentage of rural children in poverty	13.8%
URGENCY GAUGE	**U.S.**
Average rural teacher's salary	$32,693.87
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.86
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	33.8%
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.9
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	72.1%
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	4.7% (median)
Rural per capita income	$19,285
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	60.9%
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.2%
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	57.2%
Average number of students per grade	61.3
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	37.9%

SEVEN INDICATORS OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL EDUCATION IN EACH STATE

Each of the indicators in the Importance Gauge presents some regional pattern, though not consistent from indicator to indicator. We define each indicator below and summarize the state and regional patterns in the data.

- *The percentage of state's population that is rural* is the percentage of people living in areas that are classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau and generally have fewer than 2,500 people. The higher the percentage, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

Only four states (Maine, Mississippi, Vermont, and West Virginia) have a majority of their population living in rural areas. South Dakota and Arkansas come close. Generally, this percentage varies with sparseness and there is a distinct regional pattern to the states that rank high on this indicator. They are in northern New England, Appalachia, the Southeast or Mid-South, and the Great Plains. Mostly, they are moderately populated overall, with small urban centers. States in the Northeast,Southwest, and Far West are generally ranked low. Although there is a lot of open space in the West, demographically this region is as urban as the Northeast. The top 12 states on this indicator average about 1.1 million rural people, and cumulatively account for about one-quarter of the nation's total rural population. Most of the states with the largest numbers of rural people do not rank high on this list. Of the top 20 states on this indicator, only six are also among the top 20 in the number of rural people (primarily in the Southeast). Some states with a large rural population appear very low on this ranking because they are demographically dominated by very large urban centers, notably California, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, all with more than 2 million rural residents.Between them, they are home to nearly one-quarter of the U.S. rural population, but they rank from 31st (PA) to 50th (CA) on this indicator.

- The *number of rural people* is the number of people living in rural places, as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. The higher the number of rural people, the higher the state scores on the Importance Gauge.

More than half the rural population in the United States lives in 13 states, which include our most populous states and some of our most urban states—California, Michigan, New York,Ohio, and Texas, for example. Only a handful of these most rural-populous states also have at least one third of their population in rural areas—Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee—and are often thought of as "rural" states. By contrast, some of the states with the fewest rural people are characteristically considered rural,especially in the Northern Plains where the combined rural population of five states (Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) would not make the top 13 in total population.

- The *percentage of public schools in rural areas* is the percentage of regular elementary and secondary public schools in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau. The bigger the percentage of rural schools that a state has, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

This indicator tells us how prevalent schools based in rural communities are. The range is striking,from only 12.4 percent in California to 77.3 percent in South Dakota. Because rural schools tend to be smaller, the proportion of schools in rural communities tends to be larger in most states than the proportion of rural students, but not in proportion to rural population, because many rural students are transported to schools in non-rural locales. The highest percentages of rural schools are in states where the rural population is very sparse or where terrain is difficult, or both (Appalachia, the Great Plains, Northern New England, the Inter-Mountain West, and Alaska, for example). The smallest percentage of rural schools are in urban states on the East and West coasts.

The highest percentages of rural schools are in states where the rural population is very sparse or where terrain is difficult, or both.

- The *percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools* is the percentage of all public school students who are enrolled in regular elementary and secondary schools in rural areas. The higher the percentage of rural school students, the higher the state scores on the Importance Gauge.

This indicator tells us to what extent the students in a state go to a school that is in a rural place, whether they live in a rural place or not. Many states that score very high or very low on percentage of rural population also score high or low respectively on this indicator, but there are important differences. The higher the percentage of a state's population that lives in rural communities, the more likely that the percentage of students attending schools in rural places will be lower. The 21 states with the highest percentage of people living in rural places all have a lower percentage of students in rural schools. They are in Appalachia, the Great Plains, Northern New England, and the Southeast. The 14 states with the lowest percentage of rural people (and 18 of the bottom 20) have proportionally higher percentages of rural students (primarily in the far East and far West). This may be a combination of factors, including age-level profiles of the respective rural areas, pressure to build rural schools in states with sprawling urban areas, and a tendency in sparsely settled rural areas to locate schools in small cities and towns that are just big enough to be classified other than "rural."

- The *percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities* is the number of minority students in rural public schools as a percentage of all students in rural public schools. The higher the percentage of rural minority students, the higher the state scores on the Importance Gauge.

Typically, a high percentage of rural minority students indicates a large at-risk population in a state's rural schools. More than half the students in Hawaii,New Mexico, and Alaska are non-white. In general, Pacific states (Hawaii,Alaska, and California), the entire Southwest (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), and the Deep South (Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) rank high. Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota rank fairly high, too, due mainly to Native American populations. States in Appalachia, New England, the Prairie, and the Great Lakes rank low.

- The *percentage of all students attending small rural schools* is the number of students attending rural public schools with enrollments below the state median, as a percentage of all public school students in the state. The higher the percentage of students in small, rural schools, the higher the state scores on the Importance Gauge.

This indicator tells us to what extent students in a state go to schools that are both small and rural. Since the median size of schools varies by state, this is a relative measure of size as it is perceived in the context of each state's school size distribution. While this is not a highly differentiated indicator, ranging from 3 percent (New Jersey) to 18.3 percent (Iowa), it does differentiate states within a region. The top six states on this indicator are located in five different regions (the Prairie, the Mid-South, New England, Appalachia, and the Great Plains). For the most part, the leading states are those with high levels of local control and large numbers of independent school districts.

- The *percentage of rural children in poverty* is the percentage of children under the age of 18 who were below the poverty level in 1999 and lived in rural places, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The higher the percentage of children in poverty, the higher the state scores on the Importance Gauge.

Poverty is the largest persistent challenge faced by education anywhere. The highest rates of rural child poverty are in the Southwest, Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the Southeast, and the Great Plains. All of these regions are represented among the top 10 states on this indicator. Poverty rates here run from 50 percent to 100 percent higher than the national average rural child poverty rate (13.8%). The lowest rates of rural poverty are in the Northeast, the Prairie, and the Great Lakes.

IMPORTANCE GAUGE

To gauge the overall relative importance of rural education to the educational performance of each state, we average each state's ranking on these seven indicators, giving equal weight to each of the indicators. The results are presented in Table 2.

Five quintessentially rural regions, each with well-established cultural and social identities, contain all of the states in the "Crucial" category (the top quartile on the Importance Gauge). These are the Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi), the Southeast (North Carolina and South Carolina), the Great Plains (Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota), Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia), and Northern New England (Maine and Vermont). Six of the 13 states in the Very Important category (second quartile) are also in these regions.

The Very Important category disperses to include states in the Northwest, the Prairie, the Southwest and the Far West. The Important category (third quartile) includes six largely urban states with large rural populations in the Great Lakes-Mid East and Mid-West area (Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). The Useful category (fourth quartile) includes states with few rural people or a small percentage of rural people. Nine of the thirteen states in this quartile are on the East or West Coast and two (Nevada and Utah) are in the arid West where most people live in cities.

Kentucky ranks in the top quartile on six of the seven indicators in the Importance Gauge (it is not in the top quartile only in the percentage of minority students, where it ranks 42nd), and Mississippi, South Carolina, and West Virginia rank in the top quartile on five indicators. Alabama and Oklahoma rank in the top quartile on only three indicators, but each of these states ranks fairly high on all indicators.

The indicator that most frequently contributes to a high overall ranking for states is the percentage of the population living in rural areas (because some of the other indicators are a function of this indicator). The factor that contributes least often to a high overall ranking is the number of rural people, because none of the other indicators is a function of this indicator. Our indicators favor high scores for states where rural life is characteristic of a large portion of the population, no matter how large the population is.

TABLE 2. IMPORTANCE GAUGE CUMULATIVE RANKINGS*

How important is it to the overall educational performance of each state to explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving its rural communities? These rankings are the average of each state's scores on seven indicators. The lower the number, the more important it is that policymakers address rural school issues in that state.

Crucial		Very Important		Important		Useful	
MS	9.9	TN	19.3	WY	24.9	FL	31.4
NC	12.1	GA	19.4	WI	25.4	CA	33.0
SC	13.3	ID	19.6	IN	26.0	CO	33.0
SD	13.3	LA	20.7	TX	26.1	NY	34.4
KY	13.7	AK	20.9	MN	27.3	DE	35.6
AR	14.1	MO	21.7	OR	28.4	IL	36.1
WV	14.3	IA	21.9	WA	28.4	MD	36.7
ND	14.6	NM	22.1	NH	28.6	UT	38.3
AL	15.1	VA	22.6	PA	29.0	NV	39.4
OK	16.7	KS	22.7	MI	29.1	CT	40.1
ME	16.9	NE	23.0	AZ	30.1	MA	42.3
MT	16.9	HI	23.6	OH	30.6	NJ	43.1
VT	18.7					RI	45.7

* Numbers are rounded

THIRTEEN INDICATORS OF THE URGENCY WITH WHICH POLICYMAKERS SHOULD GIVE ATTENTION TO RURAL EDUCATION IN EACH STATE

We use 12 unique indicators to measure the Urgency Gauge, plus one indicator from the Importance Gauge—the percentage of population living in rural areas. These indicators produce certain regional patterns as well.

- The *average rural teacher's salary* is the average salary for teachers in rural public elementary and secondary schools, as reported by the teachers. In some states, especially in the South, this includes both state mandated pay-scale salaries and local supplements, but nowhere do they include fringe benefits. The lower the salary, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge. The lowest average salary earns a ranking of one.

Teacher pay is looming as a central issue in educational policy as schools compete for the highly qualified teachers necessary to meet state and federal standards, and as courts examine school funding systems in light of the way they position schools to compete for highly qualified teachers. Average salaries for rural teachers range from a low of $24,234 in South Dakota to a high of $49,872 in New Jersey, a 100 percent differential. The four lowest average salaries are all in Northern Plains states. In general, the highest rural salaries are in large urban states (except Alaska)

Teacher pay is looming as a central issue in educational policy as schools compete for the highly qualified teachers necessary to meet state and federal standards, and as courts examine school funding systems in light of the way they position schools to compete for highly qualified teachers.

- The *ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary* is the ratio of the average rural teacher salary to the average non-rural teacher salary. The lower the ratio, the higher a state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

Rural schools compete for teachers across state lines, but they also compete with non-rural areas within their state. This indicator measures rural schools' power to compete by calculating the "cents on the dollar" they pay teachers compared to what teachers get in other areas of the same state. There are four states where, on average, rural teachers are paid more than others (Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina and South Carolina), and three others where they are paid the same (Alaska, Oklahoma, and Washington). In all other states, rural teachers are paid less, going as low as 79 cents on the dollar in Nebraska. The lowest comparative rural teacher salaries are in Northern Plains, Prairie, and Great Lakes states. States in the South (except Arkansas), Southwest, and lower New England are likely to pay closer to (or above) parity salaries.

While these "salary gap" data are valuable overall for general comparison purposes, caution should be exercised in interpreting this statistic in some states. Salaries are sharply influenced by tenure or length of service, which may vary widely between hard-to-staff and other schools within a state. In some schools, teachers may be clustered at two extremes, with some very long-term teachers and low turnover at one end of the spectrum and many first-time, high-turnover teachers at the other end. In these circumstances, average salaries do not describe the typical situation of most teachers, and especially do not indicate much about a school's capacity to recruit or retain highly qualified new teachers. These interpretation problems are likely exacerbated in rapidly growing states where many rural schools may be on the prosperous urban fringe, while many other rural schools are in sparsely populated and economically stressed regions. We note, for example, that while rural teachers in North Carolina and South Carolina on average earn slightly more than non-rural teachers in each state, beginning rural teachers there earn only 71 percent of the average rural teacher's salary in those states. And in the hardest to staff rural schools in those states, this gap might be much more severe. Similar factors may be at work in Nevada and New Mexico, the other two states where average rural salaries are slightly above average non-rural salaries. In those states, beginning rural teachers earn only 69 and 79 percent, respectively, as much as all rural teachers in those states earn on average.[2]

- The *percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible* is the percentage of students in regular rural public elementary and secondary schools who are eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch programs. The higher the percentage of subsidized lunch eligibility, the higher a state scores on the Urgency Gauge.

This is a direct, if somewhat unreliable measure of poverty and near-poverty in the schoolhouse. It is not a measure of participation in free and reduced-price lunch programs, but is a measure of student eligibility, based on family income. It parallels closely, but not exactly, the child poverty rate used in the Importance Gauge, and in general runs at least twice the rate because it is a broader measure of household income stress. More than half the rural students are eligible for subsidized lunches in eight states (in descending order, Mississippi, New Mexico, West Virginia,Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kentucky,Wyoming, and South Carolina). Nearly half of rural students are eligible in Arkansas,Alaska, and Alabama. Rates are lowest among rural children in the urban Northeast.

- The *average rural student to teacher ratio* is the average ratio of students to teachers in regular rural public elementary and secondary schools. The higher the pupil-teacher ratio, the higher a state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

This is a rough proxy for class size, a factor in academic achievement. It ranges from 9.9 students per teacher in sparsely populated Wyoming to 18.7 students per teacher in densely populated California. Six out of the eight lowest ratios come from Plains states and all the Southwest and Northern New England states rank in the lower half of the profile. By contrast, most of the Great Lakes and the Southeastern states (including the Delta, except Arkansas) rank in the upper half. Generally, it appears that where schools are smaller, more dispersed, and independently organized in small districts, classes are also smaller. Where schools and districts are larger and systems are more centralized, classes are larger.

Where schools are smaller, more dispersed, and independently organized in small districts, classes are also smaller.

- The *percentage of rural teachers using computers in class* is the percentage of rural teachers who report that students use computers during class time. The lower the percentage of teachers reporting student use of computers, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

Does technology reach the rural classroom? As many as 85 percent (Alaska and Hawaii) and as few as 55 percent (Delaware and Arkansas) of rural teachers say "yes." In general, rates of usage are lowest in the Southeast (except North Carolina) and Northern New England, and highest in the Great Plains. Remoteness may explain much of this. The five highest users include, in descending order, Hawaii, Alaska, West Virginia,Idaho, and Wyoming. But there are some strange bedfellows on this list. The five lowest users of computers in the rural classroom are, in ascending order, Delaware, Arkansas, Mississippi, Massachusetts and New York.

- The *percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median* is the average percentage of rural district expenditures for school administration expressed as the absolute difference from the median average national expenditure for rural school administration. The bigger the difference from the national median, either higher or lower, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

Administration is necessary at the school level, where strong principal leadership is consistently reported as a factor in teaching and achievement. But either too much or too little, is likely to be counterproductive. So we measure the absolute difference between (1) the average school-level administrative expenditure as a percentage of total spending for the rural schools in a state, and (2) the national median state average for rural schools. The national median is 4.7 percent, and 10 states are at least one percentage point removed from that. Of these, seven states spend at least one percentage point less (in descending order, Arizona,California, New York, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Kentucky), and three spend at least one percentage point more (Nevada, Oregon, and Kansas). Ten states are either at the national median or within 0.1 percent of it (in ascending order, Delaware, West Virginia,Alaska, Colorado, Oklahoma,Vermont, Florida, Massachusetts,Missouri, and Michigan). This may be the least regionally sensitive of all the urgency indicators, as neither rural demography nor geography school size distribution, or organizational structure seems to explain these data.

- *Rural per capita income* is the rural per capita income by state, as measured by the U.S. Bureau of Census. The lower the rural per capita income is, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

A measure not just of poverty, but of broader economic distress. The range is from $15,177 in West Virginia to $33,428 in Connecticut. Appalachia, the Mid-South Delta, the Southwest, and the Northern Plains account for 12 of the 13 states with the lowest rural per capita income. More than half the states have a rural per capita income of less than

$20,000. All of those above that level are in the North and most are either on the Pacific coast or east of the Mississippi River. The exceptions are Minnesota (to the extent it is east of the Mississippi River), Virginia, and Wyoming.

- The *percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support* is the percentage of rural teachers who strongly or somewhat strongly agree with the statement: "I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do." The lower the percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

When teachers report that parents don't support their work, there is evidence of a school-community divide.

When teachers report that parents don't support their work, there is evidence of a school-community divide. By using this measure, we assume that teachers accurately perceive this divide. We do not assume that parents are to blame for it. In five states (Delaware, Arizona, Florida, Alaska, and Kentucky), fewer than half the rural teachers report feeling strongly or somewhat strongly that they receive a great deal of support from parents. There may be a relationship between states with a high percentage of poor and minority students in rural schools and a low score on this indicator. But it may be that the pattern is clearer with respect to the relationship between this indicator and local control. Using a classification of states constructed by van Geel (as revised and updated by the Education Commission of the States[3]), we note that among the 25 states in the upper half of this ranking are 14 of the 17 states with highly centralized decision making systems. Only six of the top 25 states are among the 23 classified by ECS as having a decentralized decision making system. Five of the 25 are among the 10 states listed by ECS as moderately decentralized.

- The *percentage of rural expenditures on transportation* is the total expenditure for vehicle operation, monitoring riders, and vehicle servicing and maintenance, expressed as a percentage of total elementary-secondary spending in rural districts. The higher the percentage of expenditures for transportation, the higher a state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

Busing kids to and from school has been a growing phenomenon for 80 years. Nationwide, rural schools spend about 4.2 percent of their money on transportation, but it runs as high as 6.4 percent in West Virginia. This spending is partly a matter of terrain and geography, but it is also a matter of policies related to school size (the larger the catchment area, the higher the spending), personnel decisions, and permissible length of the ride. Rural schools in Kentucky, a state similarly situated to West Virginia, spend only 4.4 percent of their total expenditures on transportation. Likewise, rural schools in Nebraska, a state with terrain similar to Kansas, spend only 3.2 percent of their money on transportation, while rural schools in Kansas spend 4.5 percent. Rural schools in Texas spend 2.5 percent, while those in New Mexico spend 5.9 percent. Those in North Dakota spend 5.7 percent; South Dakota, 3.7 percent. There are therefore few regional patterns here. Most states in the Southeast spend toward the lower end of the spectrum (except Louisiana), while most Great Lakes states are near the middle.

- The *percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support* is the total rural expenditure for activities dealing with the interaction of teachers and students in the classroom plus the total expenditures for pupil support (administrative, guidance, health, and logistical support including social work, accounting, counseling, record maintenance, nursing, psychological, and speech services) and instructional staff support (supervision of instruction service improvements, curriculum development, instructional staff training, media, library, and computer-assisted instruction service,) as a percentage of total elementary-secondary spending. The lower the rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support, the higher the state scores on the Urgency Gauge.

What percentage of their budgets do rural schools spend on the interaction between students and teachers and services that support students or teachers? We refer to this as "money that gets to the classroom," though it is somewhat broader than that. It excludes school level and central administration, transportation, capital expenses, interest, and food. Rural schools in Colorado get only 48.5 percent of their money into the classroom and Arizona only 49.3 percent. At the other end, rural schools in three southern New England states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, three of the least rural states in the nation) get about two-thirds of their money to the student-teacher level. In general, Southeastern states (except Mississippi) get money to the rural classroom at above median rates, while Southwestern states are below median. Otherwise there is very little regional pattern here.

- The *average number of students per grade* is a ratio of the average number of rural students in rural public schools to the average number of grades in rural public schools. The higher the ratio of students to grades, the higher the state ranks on the Urgency Gauge.

This is a proxy for school size. A rich scholarly literature validates the effectiveness of smaller schools, so the higher this number is, the higher the state's urgency ranking. Southeastern states (except Delta states Arkansas and Louisiana) tend to have bigger rural schools. Georgia, with more than 130 kids per grade, has the biggest rural schools. Seven of eight states with more than 100 students per grade in rural schools are on the East Coast (Hawaii is the exception), some of them heavily rural (North Carolina and Georgia) and some of them heavily urban (New Jersey and Rhode Island). By contrast, nine of the 12 states with the smallest school size are in the Prairie-Plains (from smallest to largest, Nebraska, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Kansas, Illinois, and Iowa). Alaska, with the most remote schools serving small villages, has the smallest schools.

- The *percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000* is the percentage of rural public elementary and secondary schools that have experienced declines in enrollment of at least 10 percent between the school years 1996 and 2000. The higher the percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments, the higher the state scores on the Urgency Gauge.

Declining enrollment is coincident with depopulation, economic distress, or both. This is an acutely Western problem. The top 14 states in this indicator are all west of the Mississippi. In five of those states, more than half the rural schools are losing enrollment (Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, and North Dakota). The Northern Plains region is the epicenter of this problem. All five states are among the top 11. East of the Mississippi, the states of Maine, North Carolina, Vermont and West Virginia—all near the top in percent of people living in rural areas—have high percentages of rural schools that are losing enrollment. Mid-South Delta states cluster near the middle (ranked from 19 to 33), and Great Lakes and Southeastern rural schools tend to have lower rates of declining enrollment. But even in South Carolina, a leading rural state with the lowest rate of declining enrollments, more than 20 percent of the rural schools are coping with sustained enrollment loses.

Declining enrollment is coincident with depopulation, economic distress, or both.

THE URGENCY GAUGE

To gauge the urgency with which policymakers in a state should address the special problems of rural education, we averaged each state's ranking on these 12 unique indicators plus one indicator from the Importance Gauge: the percentage of the population living in rural areas. We added this indicator to give some additional weight to the urgency in states where the rural population is demographically more important, and should be politically more significant. We gave equal weight to each of these 13 indicators. The results are presented in Table 3.

The diversity of states in the "Urgent" quartile is impressive. Included are states from the Southeast (Alabama, Mississippi), the Southwest (Arizona), the Great Plains (North Dakota and South Dakota), Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia), the industrial Mid-Atlantic (Pennsylvania and Delaware), Mid South-Delta (Arkansas and Louisiana), and the Great Lakes (Minnesota and Ohio).

The "Fairly" Urgent (fourth) quartile is diverse, too, but includes a substantial number of states in the Central and Southern Plains and in southern (more urban) New England, and two Great Lakes states (Michigan and Wisconsin).

The states in the two middle quartiles represent sharply divergent situations, and in some cases, these rankings may reflect the limitations of using statewide statistical averages to measure the urgency indicators. In some states, rural poverty is regionally concentrated and some statewide averages may mask sharp variations in circumstances within the state. South Georgia, Coastal South Carolina, and Northern and DownEast Maine are examples of regions whose need for rural education policy attention is critical or urgent, although the states rank only "serious" on the Urgency Gauge. At the same time, conditions in East Tennessee, coastal North Carolina, and northern New Mexico are probably among the most urgent in the nation, although those states rank only "critical."

Still, these urgency indicators paint a broad picture of difficult conditions that are widespread in some states. North Dakota stands out as the only state that ranks in the top quartile on seven of the 12 urgency indicators. Four states (Alabama, Arizona, Kentucky, and South Dakota) rank in the top quartile on six indicators. Minnesota and Ohio rank in the top quartile on only three urgency indicators, but

TABLE 3. URGENCY GAUGE CUMULATIVE RANKINGS

Given conditions in the state's rural schools and communities, how urgent is it in each state that policymakers develop explicit rural education policies? These rankings are the average of each state's scores on 13 indicators.The lower the number, the more urgently the state needs attention paid to rural education policy issues.

Urgent		Critical		Serious		Fair	
MS	16.8	VA	22.0	SC	25.2	NE	28.1
AL	17.7	UT	22.2	NY	25.2	MI	28.6
AZ	18.5	FL	22.7	ME	25.4	WY	29.0
ND	18.5	CA	22.9	MO	25.8	WI	29.3
KY	19.2	TN	23.2	GA	26.2	OK	29.6
PA	20.2	NM	23.2	IN	26.7	NH	29.8
WV	20.2	NC	23.3	KS	27.0	NJ	29.8
LA	20.4	IL	23.6	VT	27.2	WA	30.6
SD	20.5	OR	23.7	NV	27.2	CO	30.8
MN	20.8	ID	24.3	HI	27.3	AK	31.8
OH	21.2	IA	24.7	MD	27.9	MA	33.4
AR	21.7	MT	24.8	TX	28.0	CT	34.1
DE	21.8					RI	34.7

they earn a place in the top quartile of the overall gauge by ranking quite high on nearly all the urgency indicators. In fact, Ohio ranks in the lowest quartile on only one indicator (declining enrollment) while Minnesota does not achieve the bottom quartile on any urgency indicator.

The indicators that most frequently contribute to a high ranking on the Urgency Gauge are rural per capita income (eight of the top quartile states score in the top quartile on this indicator) and the percentage of the population in rural areas (seven states). These are two indicators that are generally beyond the direct influence of education policymakers.

However, four indicators contribute to top quartile rankings for six states, and all of these are well within the purview of policymakers to achieve change. These are:

- Average rural teacher salaries,
- Computer use in the classroom,
- School administrative cost, and
- The share of expenditures spent on transportation.

Five of the six states that rank in the top quartile overall and on the school administrative cost indicator rank high on that indicator because their school level administration expenditures are extremely low relative to other states (Arizona, Kentucky, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota). It might be that rural school districts in these states have been penny wise and pound foolish in paring administration costs at the principal level.

These urgency indicators paint a broad picture of difficult conditions that are widespread in some states.

The indicators that contribute least often to a high overall urgency ranking are students per grade (two states of the most "Urgent" states score in the top quartile on this indicator), and declining enrollment,percent of expenditures on teacher and pupil support, and pupil teacher ratio (three top quartile states each).

THE RURAL EDUCATION PRIORITY GAUGE

We average the cumulative rankings on the Importance and Urgency gauges to discern the priority rural education states. This procedure gives somewhat greater weight to the indicators on the Importance Gauge, since there are only seven of them and their average rank counts as much as the average rank of 13 indicators on the Urgency Gauge (and one of them, the percentage of people in rural areas, is included in both gauges). The rankings for the Rural Education Priority Gauge are presented in Table 4.

The top quartile on this gauge includes states in classic rural regions of the nation—the Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi), Appalachia (Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia), the Northern Plains (Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota), the Southeastern Black Belt (North Carolina and South Carolina), and northern New England (Maine).

There are seven states that rank in the top quartile of both the underlying gauges of Importance and Urgency: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota and West Virginia. These states are in the heart of the Mid-South Delta, Appalachia, and the Northern Plains.

TABLE 4. RURAL EDUCATION PRIORITY GAUGE

The combined average ranking of each state on the Importance and Urgency Gauges.

Leading		Major		Significant		Notable	
MS	13.4	ID	21.9	HI	25.4	MI	28.9
AL	16.4	VA	22.5	NE	25.5	WA	29.1
KY	16.4	NM	22.7	OH	25.9	NH	29.2
ND	16.6	GA	22.8	OR	26.1	NY	29.8
SD	16.9	OK	23.2	WY	26.1	IL	29.9
NC	17.7	IA	23.3	IN	26.3	UT	30.3
AR	17.9	VT	23.7	AK	26.4	CO	31.9
WV	18.5	MO	23.7	WI	26.6	MD	32.3
SC	19.2	MN	24.1	FL	27.1	NV	33.3
LA	20.5	AZ	24.3	TX	27.3	NJ	36.5
TN	20.8	PA	24.6	CA	28.0	CT	37.1
MT	20.9	KS	24.9	DE	28.7	MA	37.9
ME	21.1					RI	40.2

Eleven of the states in the top quartile on the Rural Education Priority Gauge are also ranked in the top quartile of the Importance Gauge. Only two states (Louisiana and Tennessee) not in the top quartile of the Importance Gauge are pulled into the top quartile of the Rural Education Priority Gauge by their high ranking on the Urgency Gauge. Oklahoma and Vermont are the two states ranked in the top quartile of the Importance Gauge that do not make the top quartile of the Rural Education Priority Gauge because of their relatively low ranking on the Urgency Gauge.

Eight states in the top quartile of the Urgency Gauge are also in the top quartile of the Rural Education Priority Gauge. The five states pulled into the top quartile on the Rural Education Priority Gauge because of a high ranking on the Importance Gauge and despite a relatively low ranking on the Urgency Gauge are Maine, Montana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The five states that rank in the top quartile of the Urgency Gauge, but do not make the top quartile of the Rural Education Priority Gauge because they score relatively low on the Importance Gauge are Arizona,Delaware, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

No matter how you look at it, the Mid-South Delta, central Appalachia, the coastal Southeast, the northern Plains, and northern New England stand out as the priority rural education regions.

Five of the twelve states in the second quartile of the Rural Education Priority Gauge rank in the top quartile of either the Importance or Urgency Gauge. They are Arizona, Minnesota,Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The seven states in the second quartile that do not rank in the top of either of the two underlying gauges are Georgia, Idaho, Iowa,Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, and Virginia.

The lowest ranking states on the Rural Education Priority Gauge are mostly large urban states on the East Coast or in the far West. Nearly all of them rank higher in urgency than importance (New Hampshire and Washington are exceptions) but only Illinois and Utah rank above the median on urgency.

DISCUSSION

The four quartile categories merely describe a state's relative position along a continuum. When evaluating the urgency of policy attention to rural matters, there is no bright line distinguishing Delaware as "urgent" from Virginia as merely "critical." Likewise, the difference in importance between Vermont as "crucial" and Tennessee as merely "very important" is negligible. However, these categories do allow us to group states into certain clusters in order to discuss patterns in the findings.

In interpreting the results, we have been very liberal in the use of regional terms. We have used regional terms without defining them, and in many case we have used them inconsistently—that is, we have referred to one regional configuration of states in describing results of one indicator, and used a different, overlapping configuration of states under a different regional name when discussing another indicator. Thus, Oklahoma might be part of the Great Plains, the Southern Plains, or the Southwest,depending on the context in which we are discussing its relationship with other states on a given indicator. In fact, Oklahoma is part of all those regions. In looking for patterns, we might find it aligned with the experiences of Kansas and Nebraska on one indicator and with the experience of Texas and New Mexico on another. Some readers may find this untidy, but the nuanced cultural patterns of rural America caution against rigid division of states into regions. Sometimes Mississippi is part of the Southeast, sometimes it is more particularly part of the Mid-South Delta.

Nonetheless, we have noted certain regional patters in the rankings on various indicators and on the separate and combined gauges. It seems very clear that no matter how you look at it, the Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), central Appalachia (Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia), the coastal Southeast (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina), the northern Plains (Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota), and northern New England (Maine and Vermont), and pretty much in that order, stand out as the priority rural education regions. Not all the states in these regions score high on many indicators and on one or both gauges, but the states noted do.

While the rankings in this report are useful in identifying states where rural education is paramount to good schooling in the state, it is also useful in identifying states where rural communities' educational needs may be unjustly lost in the political shuffle of state politics. No child deserves to be lost in the shuffle.

It would be a mistake to conclude that other regions and other states do not deserve the attention of policymakers. Indeed, we note 10 states that rank in the lower half on the Importance Gauge that rank in the upper half on the Urgency Gauge (Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Utah). Many of these are large, urban states, and all but Minnesota have less than one-quarter of their population in rural areas. Nonetheless, they combine to share nearly one-quarter of the nation's rural population. In the midst of their struggles to address the pressing problems of urban education, some of these states may not notice their rural schools and communities, but they ought to, as the Urgency Gauge indicates.

Likewise, there are 11 states that score in the upper half on the Importance Gauge, but in the lower half on the Urgency Gauge (Alaska, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Vermont). Rural areas in many of these states are sparsely populated and many schools and communities are remotely located. Apparently these states have some good things going for these schools and communities, and policymakers should take care not to take them for granted.

And that brings us once again to the final point we made in the first edition of *Why Rural Matters*. The Importance Gauge is a relative measure of the importance to that particular state that it explicitly address rural education. We take this approach because this report is directed to state education leaders and policymakers, and to the rural people they serve. It may be more important for North Dakota's educational performance that its policymakers consider the rural dimensions of its educational system than it is for California's policymakers to do so. But from a national perspective, it is at least as important for California to consider the educational needs of its 1.9 million people living in rural places as it is for North Dakota to consider the educational needs of the 283,000 North Dakotans who live in rural places. And from the perspective of rural Californians, it is certainly every bit as important that California have a rural education policy as it is to North Dakotans that North Dakota does. Thus, while the rankings in this report are useful in identifying states where rural education is paramount to good schooling in the state, it is also useful in identifying states where rural communities' educational needs may be unjustly lost in the political shuffle of state politics. No child deserves to be lost in the shuffle.

We hope that state policymakers in each state will consider the findings of this report and turn their attention to the particular needs of rural education in their state. Those who do will doubtless find their state's situation unique. There is no single agenda for rural education that is universal to all the states. Nonetheless, as we look at the national landscape, it seems appropriate to note once again the four indicators contributing to top rankings for many states on the Urgency Gauge. They are:

- Average rural teacher salaries,
- Computer use in the classroom,
- School administrative cost (many states spend extremely low on school-level leadership), and
- The share of expenditures spent on transportation.

In this set of issues, we see too many states spending money on moving kids around to larger schools further from home, paying rural teachers too little to compete for the highly qualified faculties needed in hard-to-staff schools, and failing to support them with strong principal leadership at the building level or with adequate technology in the classroom. These, we suspect, are rural education problems too common to ignore in any state.

[1] There are eight locale codes used by the National Center for Education Statistics. They are:

1. Central city of a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with population of 250,000 or more or a population.
2. Central city of a CMSA or MSA but not designated as a large central city.
3. Place within the CMSA or MSA of a large central city.
4. Place within the CMSA or MSA of a mid-size central city.
5. Place not within a CMSA or MSA but with population of 25,000 or more and defined as urban.
6. Place not within a CMSA or MSA with a population of at least 2,500 but less than 25,000.
7. Place not within a CMSA or MSA and designated as rural.
8. Place within a CMSA or MSA designated as rural (this code not available prior to 1998).

[2] U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Survey, 1999-2000.

[3] Mathers, Judith K. (1999). Education Accountability Systems in 50 States. Education Commission of the States, Denver Colorado.

MAPS OF STATE RANKINGS

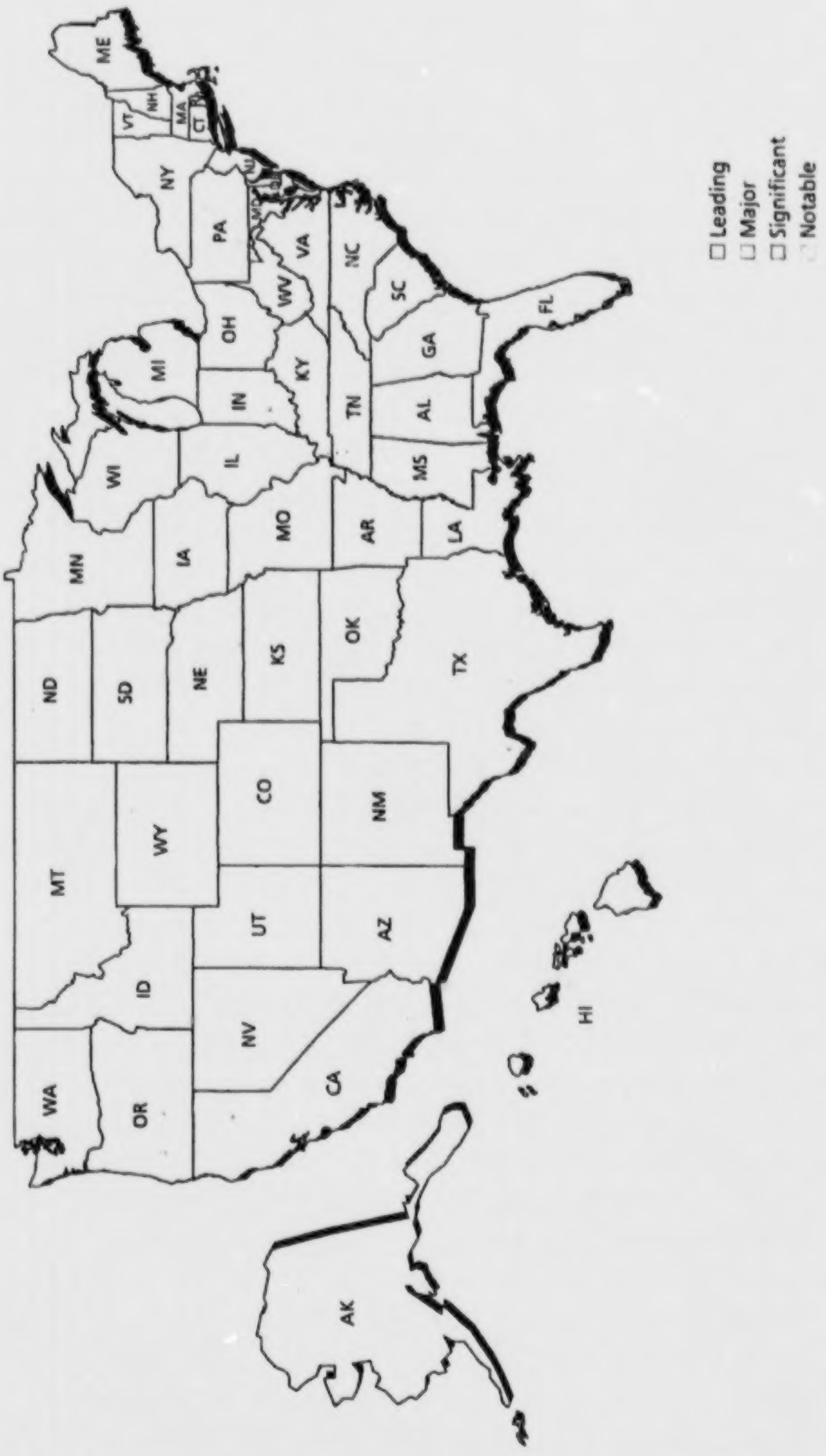
IMPORTANCE GAUGE RANKINGS

WA
MT
ND
MN
OR
ID
WY
SD
WI
MI
ME
VT
NH
NY
MA
CT
RI
IA
NE
PA
NV
UT
CO
IL
IN
OH
NJ
MD
DE
KS
MO
KY
WV
VA
AK
CA
OK
AR
TN
NC
AZ
NM
SC
MS
AL
GA
TX
LA
FL
HI
☐ Crucial
☐ Very Important
☐ Important
Useful

URGENCY GAUGE RANKINGS

WA
MT
ND
MN
ME
OR
ID
WY
SD
WI
MI
VT
NH
NY
MA
CT
IA
NE
PA
NV
UT
CO
IL
IN
OH
NJ
MD
KS
MO
KY
WV
VA
AK
CA
OK
AR
TN
NC
AZ
NM
SC
MS
AL
GA
TX
LA
FL
HI
☐ Urgent
☐ Critical
☐ Serious
Fair

RURAL EDUCATION PRIORITY GAUGE RANKINGS


ME
VT
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MI
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KY
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AR
LA
MN
IA
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MT
WY
CO
NM
ID
UT
AZ
WA
OR
NV
CA
HI
AK
☐ Leading
☐ Major
☐ Significant
☐ Notable

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

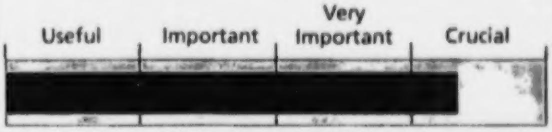
STATE-BY-STATE RESULTS

(In alphabetical order by state)

PRIORITY RANKING

2

ALABAMA – Crucial in importance and urgently in need of attention, Alabama ranks second overall among the 50 states. Contributing to these rankings are high rural poverty, low income, and both a high percentage and large numbers of rural people. Relatively large rural schools boost the average number of students per grade, lower the percentage of rural students who attend small schools, and contribute to high transportation spending. Classes are relatively large, and rural classroom computer use is among the lowest in the nation. Teachers are among the most dissatisfied with parental support.

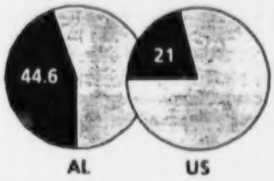


Importance Gauge

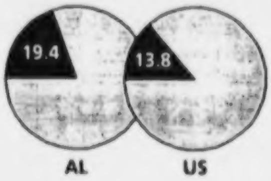
	AL	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	44.6%	8
Number of rural people	1,981,427	9
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	34.8%	27
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	31.8%	16
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	24.5%	17
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	11.9%	20
Percentage of rural children in poverty	19.4%	9

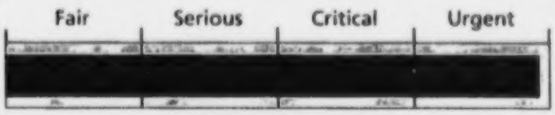
*** A rank of 1 is most important**

Percentage of population that is rural



Percentage of rural children in poverty



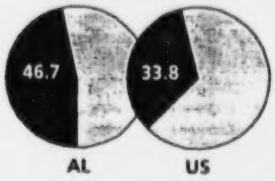


Urgency Gauge

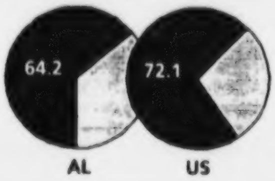
	AL	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$34,087	29
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.98	43
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	46.7%	11
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.7	16
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	64.2%	7
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.6%	17
Rural per capita income	$16,683	10
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	51.5%	7
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.0%	12
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	58.5%	25
Average number of students per grade	67.5	19
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	34.7%	26

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

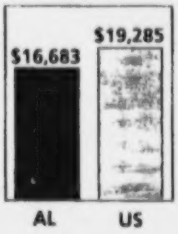
Percentage of rural students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch



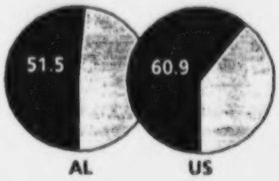
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Rural per capita income



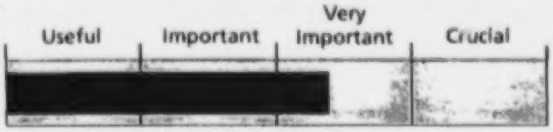
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



ALASKA – Alaska has many small rural schools, many serving Native populations and more than half suffering declining enrollment. Isolated schools serving small villages keep transportation spending among the lowest in the nation and computer use in the classroom among the highest. Alaska ranks among the top 10 states in the percentage of rural children eligible for subsidized lunches. It is one of the few states that pays rural teachers on a par with others. Rural education is very important, and conditions fairly urgent.

PRIORITY RANKING

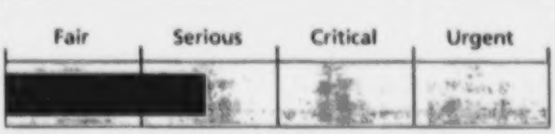
32



Importance Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	34.4%	18
Number of rural people	215,675	45
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	56.1%	7
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	27.7%	23
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	51.1%	3
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	9.9%	30
Percentage of rural children in poverty	15%	20

* A rank of 1 is most important

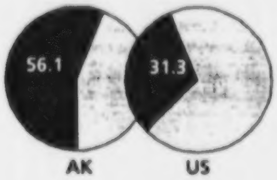


Urgency Gauge

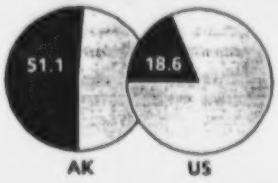
	AK	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$44,658	48
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.00	45
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	47.5%	10
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.4	34
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	84.5%	49
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	47
Rural per capita income	$20.567	35
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	46.6%	4
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	2.4%	47
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	58.0%	23
Average number of students per grade	12.0	50
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	50.6%	4

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

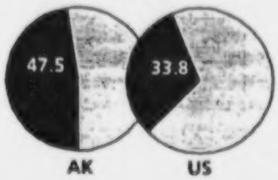
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



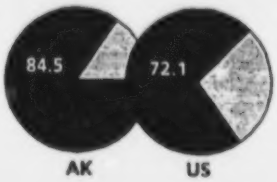
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



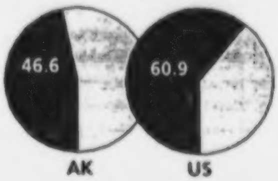
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



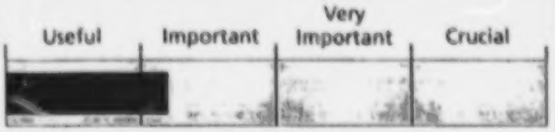
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



ARIZONA – Only 12% of Arizona's people and students and 19% of its schools are in rural communities, but the state ranks first in the percentage of rural children living in poverty and fourth in the percentage who are minorities, making rural education important to the state's overall educational performance. Both school-level administrative costs and the percentage of rural school money that gets into the classroom are extremely low, as are teachers' salaries and their perception of parental support for their work. The need for policy attention is urgent.

PRIORITY RANKING

23

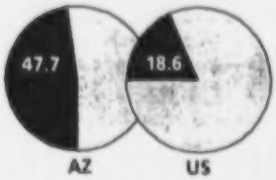


Importance Gauge

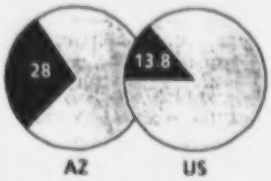
	AZ	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	11.8%	42
Number of rural people	607,907	32
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	18.8%	46
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.1%	49
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	47.7%	4
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	8.5%	37
Percentage of rural children in poverty	28%	1

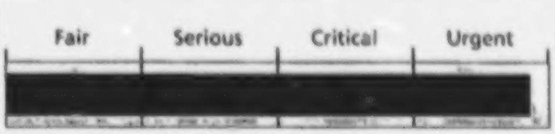
* A rank of 1 is most important

Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



Percentage of rural children in poverty



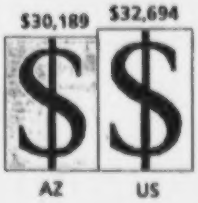


Urgency Gauge

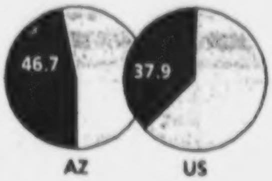
	AZ	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$30,189	12
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.90	21
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	12.4	40
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	67.0%	12
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-3.2%	1
Rural per capita income	$17,533	16
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	44.0%	2
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.0%	33
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	49.3%	2
Average number of students per grade	51.3	31
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	46.7%	10

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

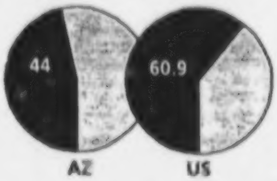
Average rural teacher's salary



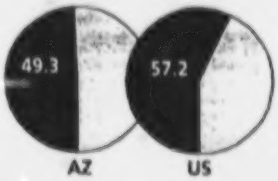
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



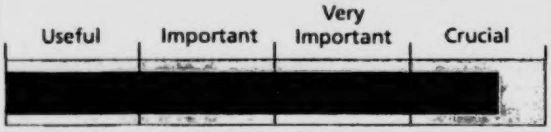
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



ARKANSAS – Arkansas is among the leaders in percentages of its population living in rural communities, rural children living in poverty, and students attending small, rural schools. But while the state's many small, rural schools get more of their slim budgets into the classroom than do the rural schools in almost every other state, rural teacher salaries are among the lowest in the nation and the gap between rural and other teachers' salaries is wide. Rural education is critically important, and the need for attention is urgent.

PRIORITY RANKING

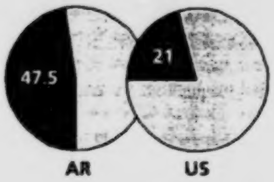
7

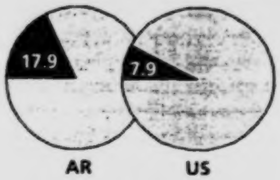


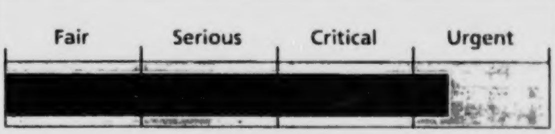
Importance Gauge

	AR	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	47.5%	6
Number of rural people	1,269,221	21
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	44.4%	15
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	30.5%	19
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	14.5%	26
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	17.9%	2
Percentage of rural children in poverty	18.4%	10

*** A rank of 1 is most important**


Percentage of population that is rural

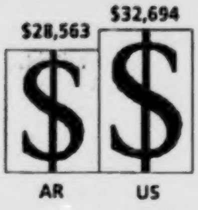

Percentage of all students attending small rural schools

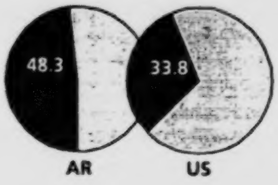


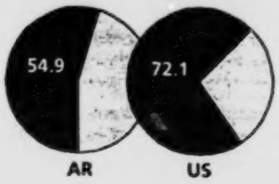
Urgency Gauge

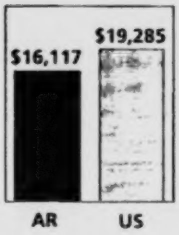
	AR	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$28,563	6
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.88	16
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	48.3%	9
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	12.8	39
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	54.9%	2
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.4%	28
Rural per capita income	$16,117	6
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	58.2%	20
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.7%	38
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	63.1%	45
Average number of students per grade	46.0	34
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	31.7%	33

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**


Average rural teacher's salary


Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch

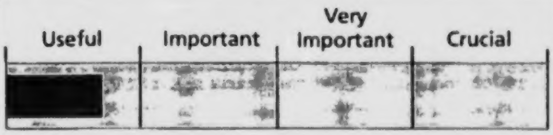

Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class


Rural per capita income

CALIFORNIA – Rural California has a high percentage of poor children but high per capita income overall. Even with 1.9 million rural people, the state ranks last in the percentage of people, students, and schools in rural communities, and next-to-last in the percentage of rural students in small schools. Rural classes are big, declining enrollment is widespread, and relatively little money gets into the classroom or school-level administration. Rural teachers are not paid well compared to other California teachers.The need for attention to rural schools is critical.

PRIORITY RANKING

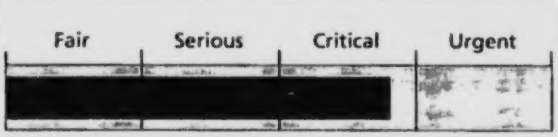
36



Importance Gauge

	CA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	5.6%	50
Number of rural people	1,881,985	11
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	12.4%	50
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	6.0%	50
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	41.0%	7
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	3.5%	49
Percentage of rural children in poverty	16.5%	14

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

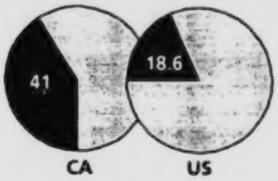


Urgency Gauge

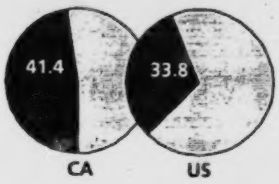
	CA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$40,383	41
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.90	20
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	41.4%	13
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	18.7	1
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	75.0%	37
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-2.4%	2
Rural per capita income	$23,904	42
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	53.1%	10
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	1.9%	49
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	52.6%	7
Average number of students per grade	65.9	20
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	47.9%	6

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

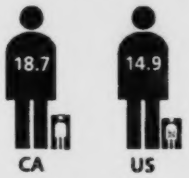
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



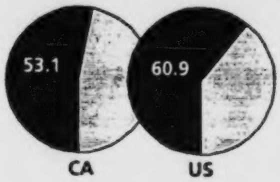
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



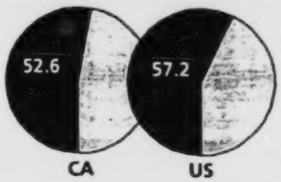
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



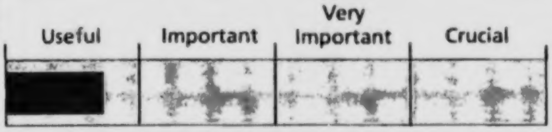
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



COLORADO – With a relatively prosperous rural population, Colorado ranks 22nd or lower on all Importance Gauge indicators. Rural teacher salaries are relatively low, however, and the state has one of the biggest rural teacher pay gaps of any state. The rate at which spending gets into the rural classroom is the lowest in the nation.

PRIORITY RANKING

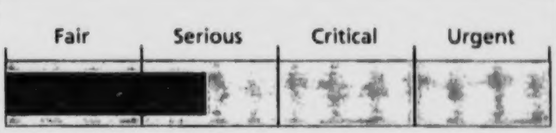
44



Importance Gauge

	CO	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	15.5%	37
Number of rural people	668,076	31
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	31.3%	33
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	19.1%	38
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	17.6%	22
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	8.9%	35
Percentage of rural children in poverty	9.8%	35

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

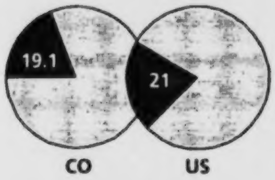


Urgency Gauge

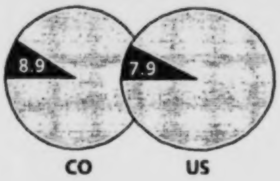
	CO	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$31,409	16
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.85	9
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	19.7%	40
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.2	29
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	73.6%	32
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	46
Rural per capita income	$24,865	45
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	69.0%	43
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.0%	43
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	48.5%	1
Average number of students per grade	51.7	30
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	34.0%	29

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

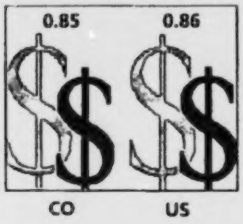
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



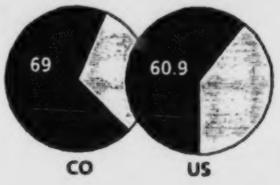
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



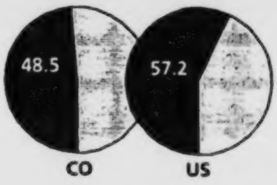
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



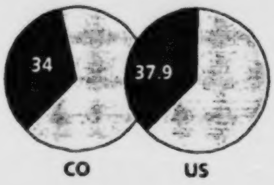
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



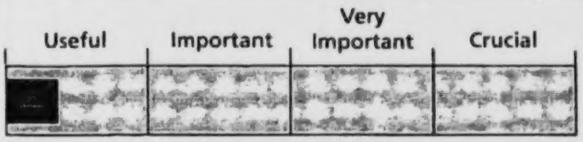
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



CONNECTICUT – With more rural people than most Northern Plains states, you'd think rural education would be fairly important in Connecticut, but it ranks 31st or lower on all Importance indicators. It has a lower percentage of rural children in poverty than any other state. It also enjoys the smallest percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments, highest rural per capita income, highest rural teacher salaries (and a small pay gap), and second highest percentage of rural school money that reaches the classroom. Rural education here is in pretty good shape.

PRIORITY RANKING

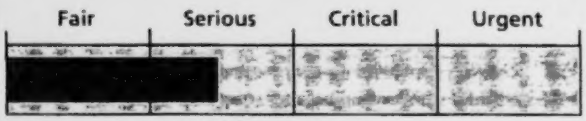
48



Importance Gauge

	CT	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	12.3%	40
Number of rural people	417,506	39
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	23.2%	41
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	20.8%	36
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	7.6%	31
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	6.0%	44
Percentage of rural children in poverty	2.7%	50

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

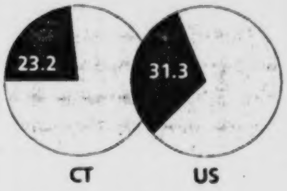


Urgency Gauge

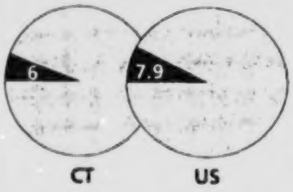
	CT	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$48,332	49
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.96	34
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.1	37
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	66.4%	9
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.4%	29
Rural per capita income	$33,428	50
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	67.8%	39
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.0%	13
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	64.5%	48
Average number of students per grade	97.3	11
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	17.7%	50

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

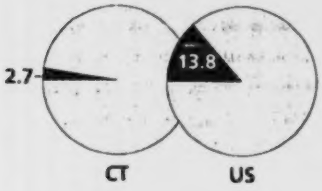
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



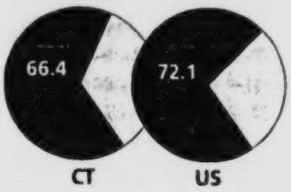
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



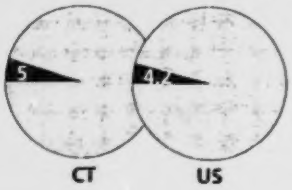
Percentage of rural children in poverty



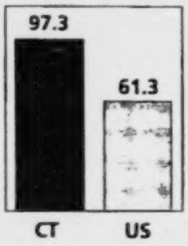
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



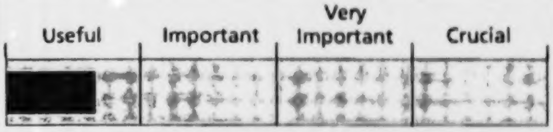
Average number of students per grade



DELAWARE – Low on all Importance indicators except rural minority students (13th), Delaware does rank high on several Urgency indicators. It has the nation's worst rural teacher perceptions of parental support, lowest classroom use of computers,next-to-worst rural school size, and 7th highest transportation spending rate. The pay gap between rural and other teachers also ranks high at 19th. Overall urgency is ranking high, at 13th.

PRIORITY RANKING

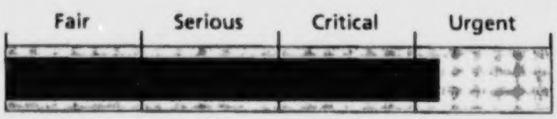
37



Importance Gauge

	DE	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	19.9%	34
Number of rural people	155,842	48
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	21.3%	43
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	19.5%	37
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	27.4%	13
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	6.5%	43
Percentage of rural children in poverty	11%	31

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

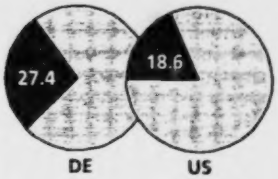


Urgency Gauge

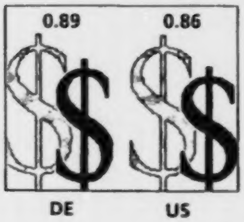
	DE	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$38,035	37
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.89	19
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	32.8%	25
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.8	21
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	52.5%	1
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.0%	49
Rural per capita income	$21.303	41
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	40.0%	1
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.6%	7
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	58.1%	24
Average number of students per grade	124.3	2
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	37.0%	23

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

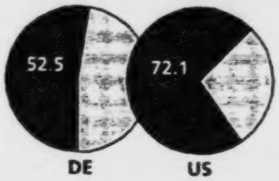
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



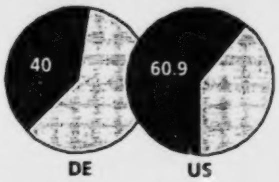
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



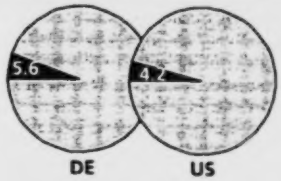
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



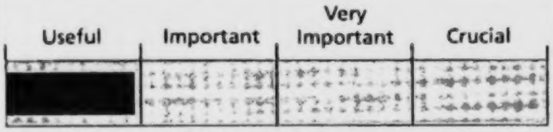
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



FLORIDA – There are more than 1.7 million rural Floridians, but they constitute only 11 percent of the population, and few of the schools or students are in rural communities. Both poverty and minority rates are high in rural Florida, however, and the state ranks among the ten most urgent regarding rural school size, lack of parental support for rural teachers, percentage of rural school spending that gets into the classroom, and rural student computer use, making conditions in critical need of policy attention.

PRIORITY RANKING

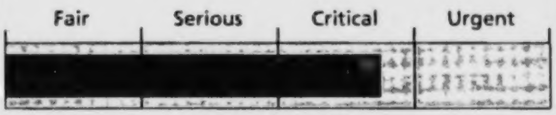
34



Importance Gauge

	FL	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	10.7%	44
Number of rural people	1,712,358	14
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	18.2%	47
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	16.7%	41
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	29.6%	12
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	5.1%	46
Percentage of rural children in poverty	15.7%	16

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

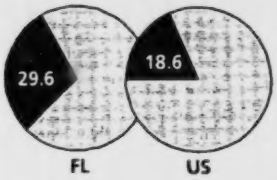


Urgency Gauge

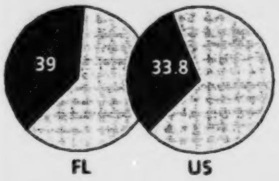
	FL	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,757	25
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.95	30
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	39.0%	15
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.7	17
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	65.2%	8
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.1%	43
Rural per capita income	$19,441	26
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	45.4%	3
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.0%	34
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	51.6%	4
Average number of students per grade	116.1	3
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	26.1%	43

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

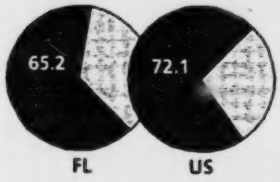
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



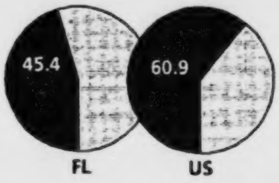
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



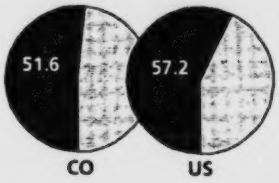
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



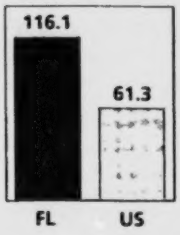
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



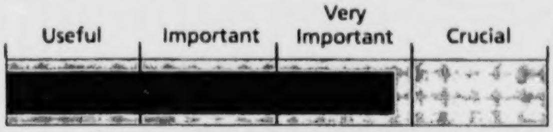
Average number of students per grade



GEORGIA – Among the top 20 states in most Importance indicators,including 7th in the number of rural people, Georgia's rural education system is very important to the state. Georgia has the largest rural schools in the nation, high levels of poverty, and a large percentage of rural teachers who feel parents don't support their work. Rural teachers are paid fairly well, and not much below other teachers in the state. Georgia's rural schools are in serious need of policy attention.

PRIORITY RANKING

17

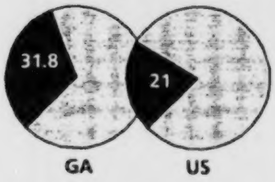


Importance Gauge

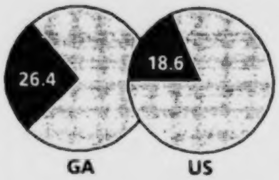
	GA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	28.4%	26
Number of rural people	2,322,290	7
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	33.4%	30
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	31.8%	15
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	26.4%	14
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	10.8%	26
Percentage of rural children in poverty	15.2%	18

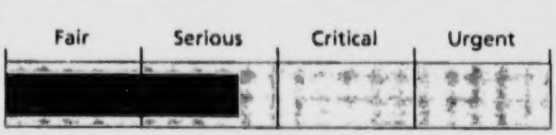
*** A rank of 1 is most important**

Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



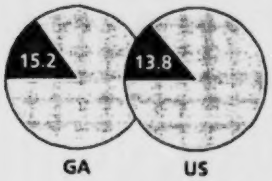


Urgency Gauge

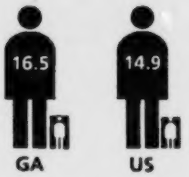
	GA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$37,867	36
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.98	41
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	35.7%	22
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.5	12
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	69.4%	21
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.3%	30
Rural per capita income	$18,337	20
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	51.9%	9
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.3%	41
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.6%	36
Average number of students per grade	131.0	1
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	24.7%	45

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

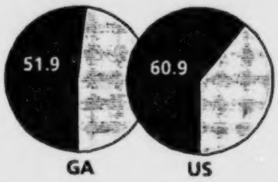
Percentage of rural children in poverty



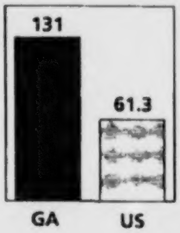
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



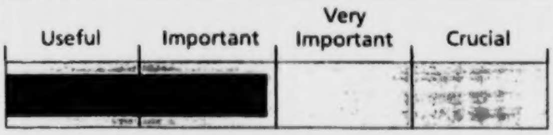
Average number of students per grade



HAWAII – Among the least rural states in the nation, Hawaii nonetheless ranks high in the percentage of rural children who are poor or minority, and in the percentage of schools and students located in rural communities. These factors combine to make rural education very important. Rural schools are big, but the state leads the nation in the percentage of its rural schools suffering declining enrollment. Student computer use is very high. Overall, Hawaii's rural schools are in serious need of policy attention.

PRIORITY RANKING

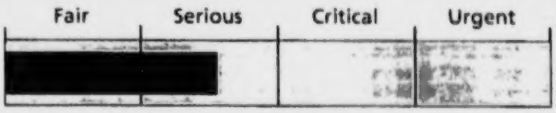
26



Importance Gauge

	HI	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	8.5%	47
Number of rural people	103,312	49
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	38.8%	21
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	37.6%	9
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	78.0%	1
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	9.4%	31
Percentage of rural children in poverty	19.9%	7

* A rank of 1 is most important

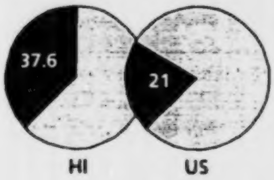


Urgency Gauge

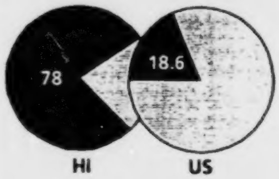
	HI	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$36,315	34
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.97	39
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	44.4%	12
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.4	13
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	85.5%	50
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	N/A	N/A
Rural per capita income	$20,113	30
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	68.4%	42
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	N/A	N/A
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	N/A	N/A
Average number of students per grade	104.7	5
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	58.3%	1

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

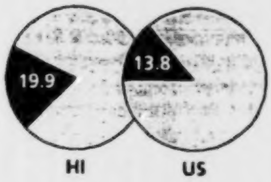
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



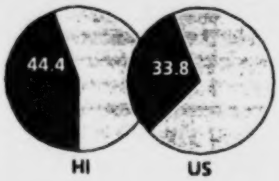
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



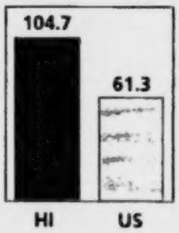
Percentage of rural children in poverty



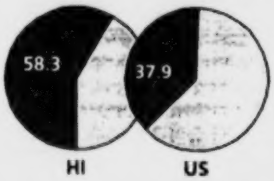
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Average number of students per grade



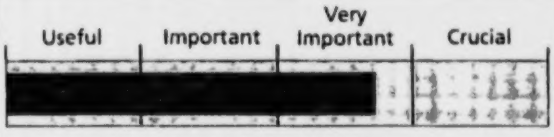
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



IDAHO – The Gem State ranks in the top ten both in the percentage of schools in rural communities and the percentage of students who attend small, rural schools. Transportation spending ranks moderately high, but the percentage of money that gets into the classroom ranks even higher. Rural child poverty rates are also fairly high, and per capita income low. Declining enrollment is widespread. The need for policy attention is critical in a state where rural education is very important.

PRIORITY RANKING

14

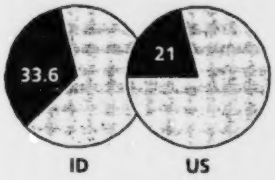


Importance Gauge

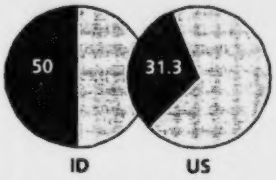
	ID	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	33.6%	19
Number of rural people	434,456	38
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	50.0%	9
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	33.1%	13
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	13.9%	27
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	14.7%	8
Percentage of rural children in poverty	14.3%	23

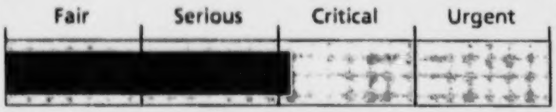
*** A rank of 1 is most important**

Percentage of population that is rural



Percentage of public schools in rural areas



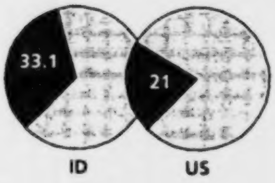


Urgency Gauge

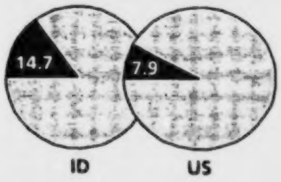
	ID	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$31,558	17
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.93	28
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	38.6%	17
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.8	15
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	80.1%	47
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.6%	19
Rural per capita income	$17,170	14
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	68.1%	37
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.8%	16
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	61.3%	42
Average number of students per grade	45.5	36
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	47.1%	9

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

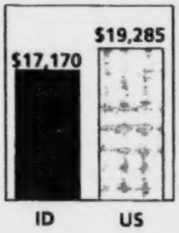
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



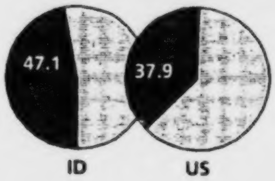
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Rural per capita income



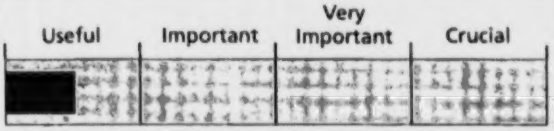
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



ILLINOIS – Rural people make up only 12% of the population (and 13% of the students), but their sheer numbers (over 1.5 million) make rural education matter in Illinois. The state ranks 3rd worst in the nation in the percentage of rural school expenditures that gets into classrooms. School administrative costs are below the national rural median, but the pay gap between rural teacher salaries and those of other Illinois teachers is second worst in the nation. Overall, conditions are critical.

PRIORITY RANKING

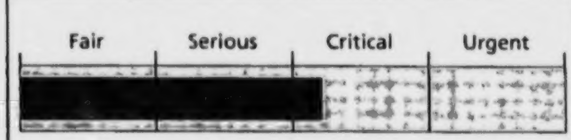
42



Importance Gauge

	IL	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	12.2%	41
Number of rural people	1,509,773	18
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	25.4%	37
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	13.1%	45
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	5.9%	35
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.8%	38
Percentage of rural children in poverty	8.9%	39

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

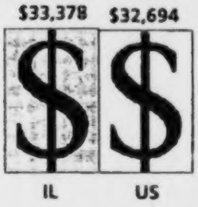


Urgency Gauge

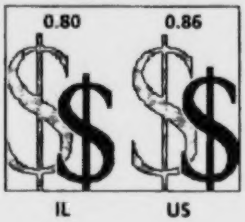
	IL	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,378	24
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.80	2
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.7	24
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	70.0%	22
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.5%	21
Rural per capita income	$20,528	34
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	62.0%	30
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.9%	14
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	50.9%	3
Average number of students per grade	36.6	40
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	34.1%	28

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

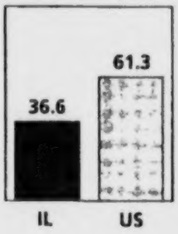
Average rural teacher's salary



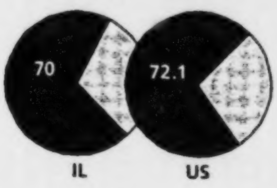
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



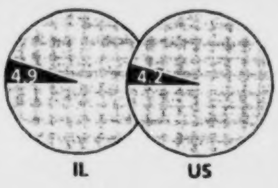
Average number of students per grade



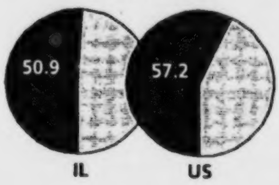
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



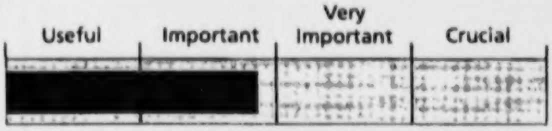
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



INDIANA – Indiana has many rural people, few minorities and not very much poverty. The rural school landscape in Indiana features big classes in big schools, and a relatively high rate of transportation spending. But rural teacher salaries are relatively high and compare pretty well with salaries of Indiana's non-rural teachers. Rural education is important in Indiana, and merits serious attention by policymakers.

PRIORITY RANKING

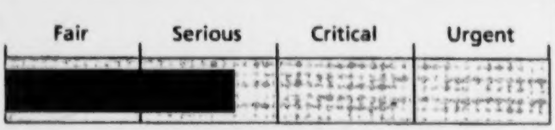
31



Importance Gauge

	IN	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	29.2%	23
Number of rural people	1,776,474	13
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	37.1%	25
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	31.7%	17
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	3.5%	43
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	12.3%	17
Percentage of rural children in poverty	7.6%	44

* A rank of 1 is most important

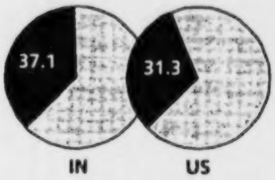


Urgency Gauge

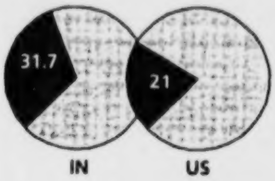
	IN	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$39,163	39
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.97	37
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	19.8%	39
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	17.6	6
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	70.8%	24
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.3%	32
Rural per capita income	$20,026	28
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	63.9%	34
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.7%	18
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	52.3%	6
Average number of students per grade	80.5	15
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	22.5%	46

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

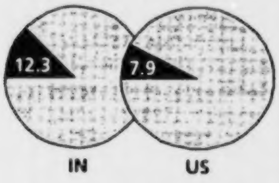
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



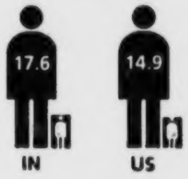
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



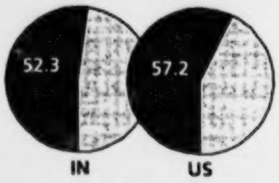
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



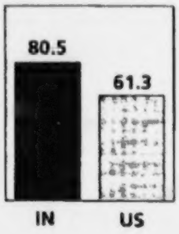
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



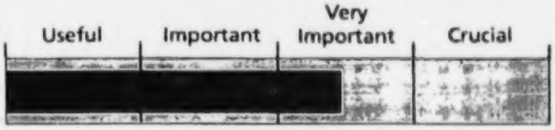
Average number of students per grade



IOWA – The Hawkeye State leads the nation in the percentage of its students going to small, rural schools and is among the leaders in the percentage of schools that are in rural communities. Rural poverty and minority rates are low, but rural per capita income is very modest. Iowa's rural teacher salaries are the 5th lowest in the nation, and 3rd worst when compared to other teachers in their state. Teachers report a high degree of parental support. Rural education is very important to Iowa, and the need for policy attention is critical.

PRIORITY RANKING

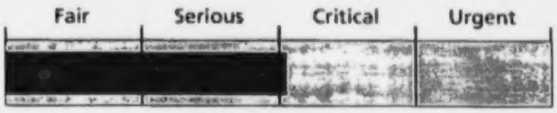
19



Importance Gauge

	IA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	38.9%	14
Number of rural people	1,138,892	24
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	48.7%	10
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	31.3%	18
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.7%	45
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	18.3%	1
Percentage of rural children in poverty	8.6%	41

* A rank of 1 is most important

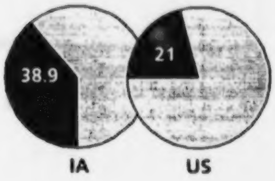


Urgency Gauge

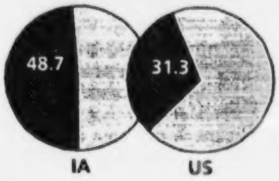
	IA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$27,052	5
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.80	3
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	24.0%	34
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.5	33
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	72.8%	31
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.4%	26
Rural per capita income	$19,007	24
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	68.1%	40
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.8%	36
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	51.7%	5
Average number of students per grade	39.5	39
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	33.6%	31

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

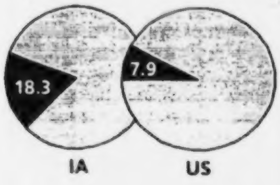
Percentage of population that is rural



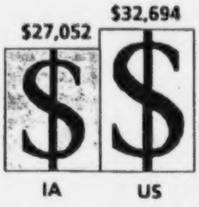
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



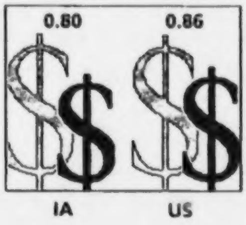
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



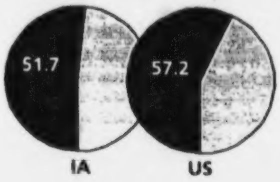
Average rural teacher's salary



Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary

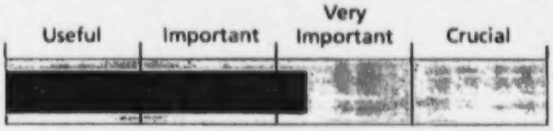


Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



KANSAS – Nearly half the schools in Kansas are rural, and the state ranks seventh in the percentage of its students who attend smaller rural schools. Spending on rural school administration is high, while the percentage of rural school expenditures reaching classrooms is low. But rural class size is small and computer use in the classroom is high, and Kansas' rural teachers are among the most likely in the nation to feel support from parents. At the same time, they are among the lowest paid in the nation. Rural education is very important to Kansas, and merits serious policy attention.

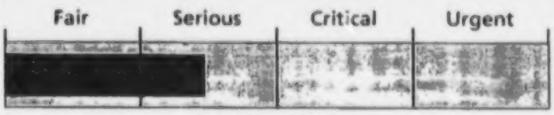
PRIORITY RANKING
25



Importance Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	28.6%	25
Number of rural people	767,749	27
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	47.5%	12
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	29.9%	20
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	8.3%	30
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	14.9%	7
Percentage of rural children in poverty	9.5%	38

* A rank of 1 is most important

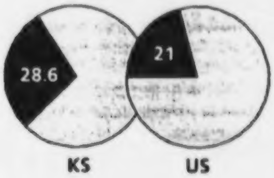


Urgency Gauge

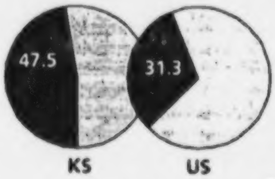
	KS	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$30,747	14
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.96	35
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	27.9%	30
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	12.1	41
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	76.7%	40
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	1.3%	6
Rural per capita income	$18,946	22
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	70.2%	47
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.5%	20
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	53.1%	9
Average number of students per grade	35.1	41
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	38.8%	21

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

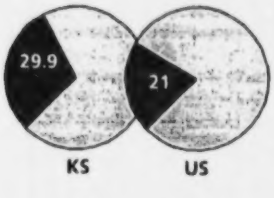
Percentage of population that is rural



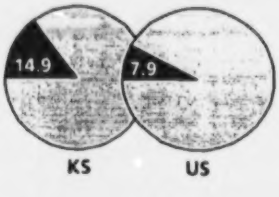
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



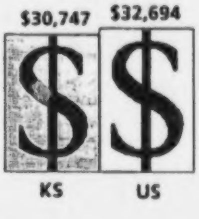
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



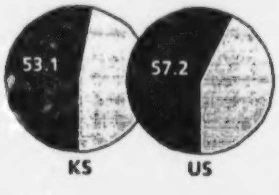
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Average rural teacher's salary



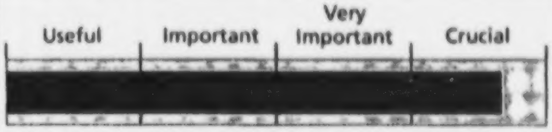
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



KENTUCKY – Rural education in Kentucky is crucial, with the state ranking in the top quarter of all states on six of the seven Importance indicators.But rural schools and the classes in them are fairly big in Kentucky, and relatively few rural teachers feel that parents support their work.All of this is alarming in a state where rural poverty is so wide and deep. Altogether, the situation for rural schools in Kentucky remains urgent.

PRIORITY RANKING

3

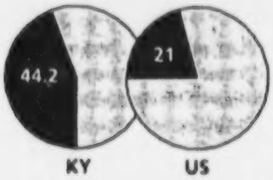


Importance Gauge

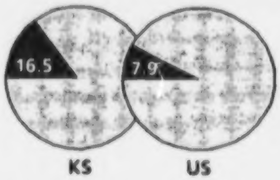
	KY	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	44.2%	9
Number of rural people	1,787,969	12
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	45.7%	13
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	37.6%	10
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	3.9%	42
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	16.5%	5
Percentage of rural children in poverty	22.3%	5

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

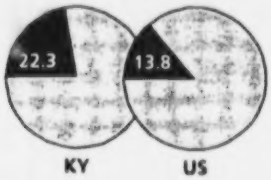
Percentage of population that is rural



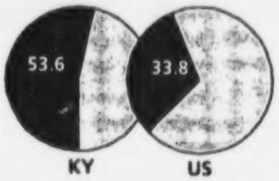
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools

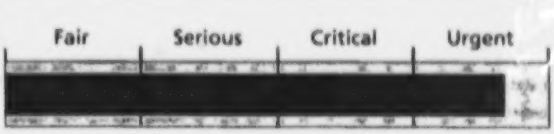


Percentage of rural children in poverty



Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



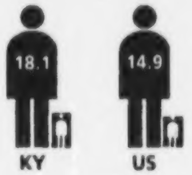


Urgency Gauge

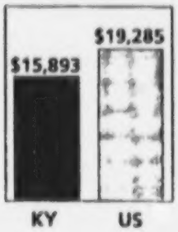
	KY	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,908	26
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.98	42
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	53.6%	6
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	18.1	4
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	74.9%	36
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-1.0%	10
Rural per capita income	$15,893	5
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	49.4%	5
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.4%	28
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	57.8%	22
Average number of students per grade	61.8	24
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	32.7%	32

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



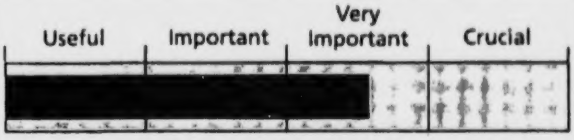
Rural per capita income



LOUISIANA – Rural education is very important in Louisiana, which ranks in the top 10 in rural children in poverty, rural minority students, and subsidized lunch eligibility. Rural per capita income is among the lowest in the nation. Fortunately, schools and classrooms are moderate in size, and schools do a very good job of getting most of their money into the classroom, despite the fact that rural teachers are the 8th lowest paid in the nation and transportation spending is second highest in the nation. It is urgent that policymakers pay attention to the Pelican State's rural schools.

PRIORITY RANKING

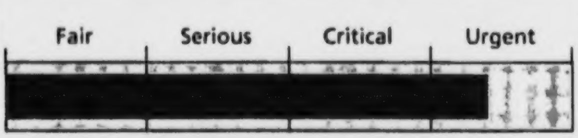
10



Importance Gauge

	LA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	27.4%	27
Number of rural people	1,223,311	22
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	31.9%	32
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	26.3%	25
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.7%	9
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	11.3%	24
Percentage of rural children in poverty	21.5%	6

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

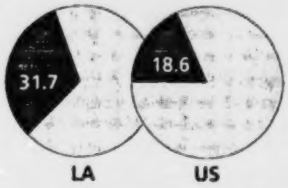


Urgency Gauge

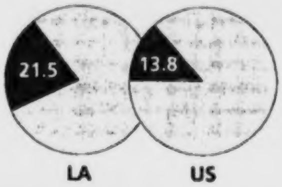
	LA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$28,623	8
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.93	27
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	54.2%	4
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.8	22
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	66.7%	10
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.2%	38
Rural per capita income	$15,495	4
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	62.8%	33
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	6.2%	2
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	62.0%	44
Average number of students per grade	60.8	27
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	40.3%	19

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

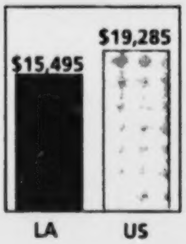
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



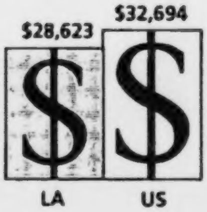
Percentage of rural children in poverty



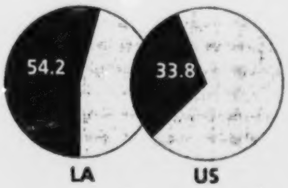
Rural per capita income



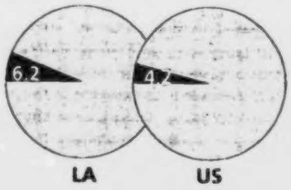
Average rural teacher's salary



Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



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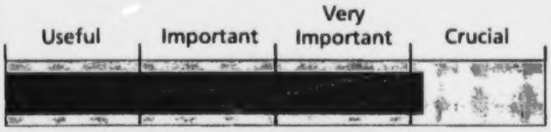
MAINE – Rural education is crucially important in Maine. It ranks 2nd in the nation in its percentage of people in rural communities and of students in rural schools. It ranks 4th in the percentage of students in small rural schools, and 5th in the number of schools in rural communities. Rural teacher salaries lag behind most states, student computer use is relatively low, and two in five schools are chronically losing enrollment. But schools and classes are small and most teachers feel support from parents. Modest statewide average rural poverty levels mask sharp regional variation.

PRIORITY RANKING

13

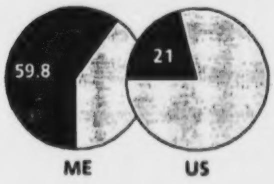


Importance Gauge

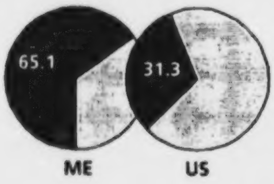
	ME	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	59.8%	2
Number of rural people	762,045	28
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	65.1%	5
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	54.6%	2
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.6%	47
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	16.8%	4
Percentage of rural children in poverty	11.6%	30

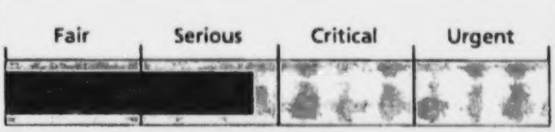
* A rank of 1 is most important

Percentage of population that is rural



Percentage of public schools in rural areas



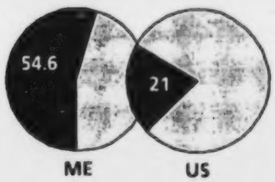


Urgency Gauge

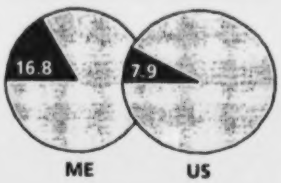
	ME	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$32,579	21
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.92	23
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	32.5%	26
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.6	32
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	68.5%	16
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.3%	31
Rural per capita income	$19,006	23
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	69.5%	45
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.4%	24
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.5%	33
Average number of students per grade	42.8	37
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	42.2%	17

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

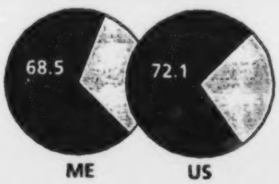
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



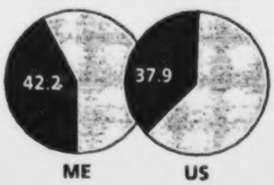
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



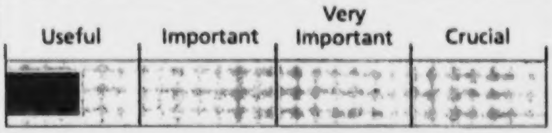
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



PRIORITY RANKING

45

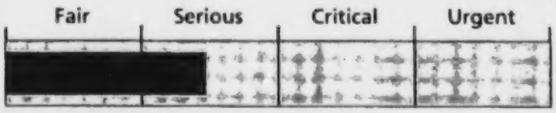
MARYLAND – With nearly three-quarters of a million people living in rural communities, a large percentage of them minorities, Maryland should be giving attention to rural education despite low rankings on most other Importance indicators. Maryland's rural schools and classes are relatively big, a lot of money is spent busing kids, and too many teachers feel parents don't support them, all symptoms of a school and community divide. Conditions warrant serious policy attention.



Importance Gauge

	MD	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	13.9%	38
Number of rural people	737,818	29
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	21.7%	42
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.7%	40
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	18.0%	21
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.3%	42
Percentage of rural children in poverty	6.5%	45

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

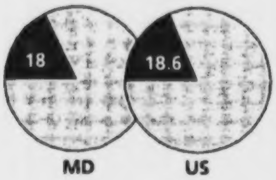


Urgency Gauge

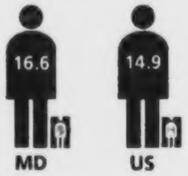
	MD	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$41,163	43
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.96	36
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	17.6%	41
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.6%	10
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.0%	25
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.7%	25
Rural per capita income	$25,785	46
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	51.0%	6
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.2%	11
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.7%	38
Average number of students per grade	103.8	6
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	21.5%	47

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

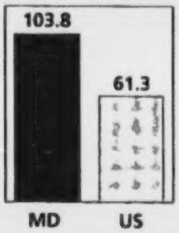
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



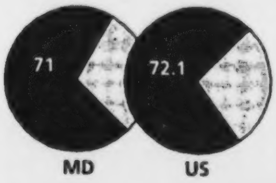
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



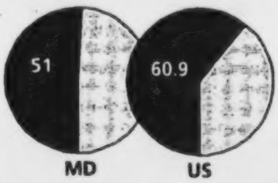
Average number of students per grade



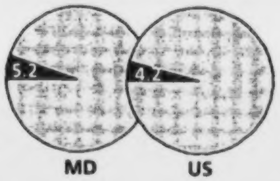
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



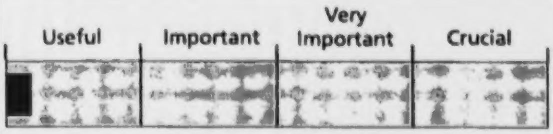
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



PRIORITY RANKING

49

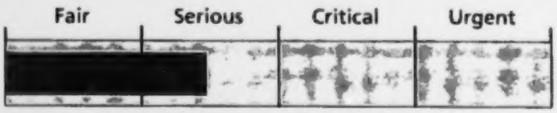
MASSACHUSETTS – Not very rural, Massachusetts ranks in the bottom 10 on most Importance indicators. But rural education is still fairly important to the Bay State, with more than half a million people living in rural communities (more than either Vermont or New Hampshire, or for that matter, South Dakota and Wyoming combined). Rural schools are big, lag in making use of classroom computers (4th worst nationwide), and many are declining in enrollment. But rural teachers are paid well and few states get a higher percentage of rural school expenditures into the classroom.



Importance Gauge

	MA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	8.6%	46
Number of rural people	547,730	33
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	19.8%	44
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.7%	39
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.5%	38
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	4.3%	47
Percentage of rural children in poverty	3.8%	49

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

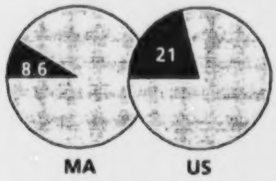


Urgency Gauge

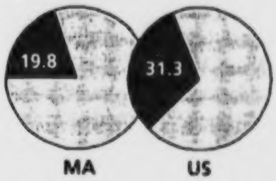
	MA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$42,288	45
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.95	32
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	9.6%	45
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	60.4%	4
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	42
Rural per capita income	$28,500	48
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	64.9%	36
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.7%	19
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	63.8%	47
Average number of students per grade	93.9	12
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	35.6%	25

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

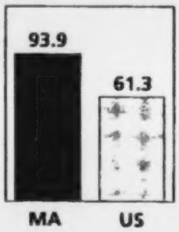
Percentage of population that is rural



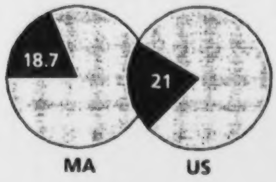
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



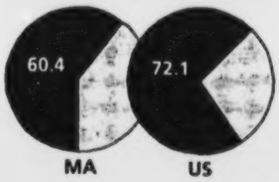
Average number of students per grade



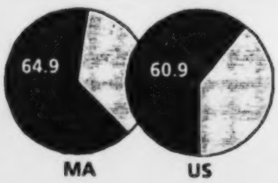
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



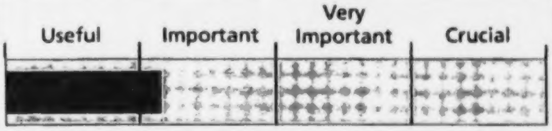
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



MICHIGAN – Rural education in the Wolverine State is important because there are more than 2.5 million people in Michigan's rural communities. Rural schools and classes tend to be big, a relatively low percentage of rural school expenditures get into classrooms, and although teacher pay compares very well with other states, the pay gap between Michigan's rural and non-rural teachers is very large. But Michigan's rural teachers are among the most likely in the nation to feel support from parents.

PRIORITY RANKING

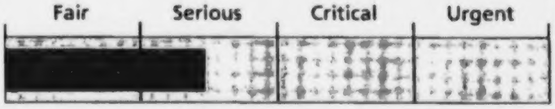
38



Importance Gauge

	MI	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	25.3%	29
Number of rural people	2,518,987	5
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	29.7%	36
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	25.1%	29
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	7.1%	32
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	9.0%	33
Percentage of rural children in poverty	8.7%	40

* A rank of 1 is most important

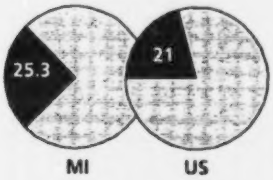


Urgency Gauge

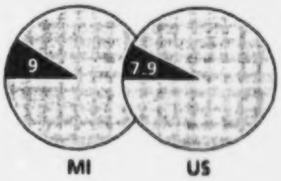
	MI	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$41,128	42
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.86	13
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	24.1%	33
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	17.7	5
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	75.7%	38
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	40
Rural per capita income	$20,685	36
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	69.5%	46
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.2%	29
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	53.8%	10
Average number of students per grade	76.9	16
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	31.1%	35

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

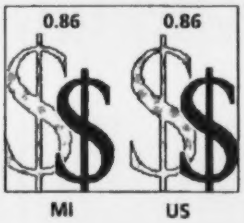
Percentage of population that is rural



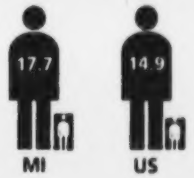
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



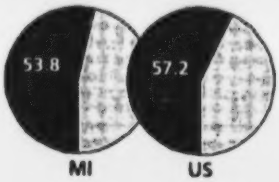
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



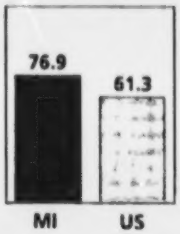
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



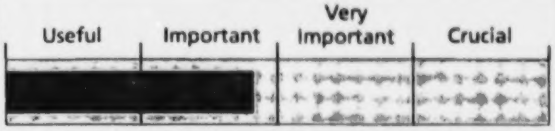
Average number of students per grade



PRIORITY RANKING

22

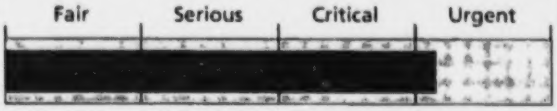
MINNESOTA – Minnesota's below-average scores on eight of 12 Urgency indicators, make it the tenth most urgent ranking state in the nation. The pay gap between rural and other teachers is the 6th worst in the nation, and a relatively small percentage of rural school expenditures get into the classroom, despite spending on school-level administration that is well below national averages. Rural schools and classes are both moderately sized, but transportation costs eat up a relatively large part of the budget.



Importance Gauge

	MN	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	29.1%	24
Number of rural people	1,429,420	20
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	38.0%	23
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	22.0%	33
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	6.9%	33
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	13.0%	16
Percentage of rural children in poverty	8.4%	42

* A rank of 1 is most important

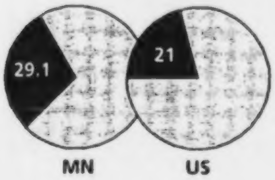


Urgency Gauge

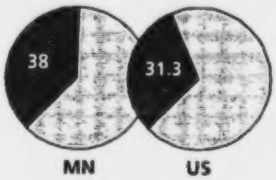
	MN	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,084	23
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.84	6
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	28.6%	28
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.7	23
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.6%	29
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-1.2%	7
Rural per capita income	$20,090	29
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	57.4%	18
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.8%	17
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	54.0%	12
Average number of students per grade	47.9	33
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	38.5%	22

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

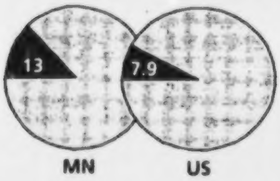
Percentage of population that is rural



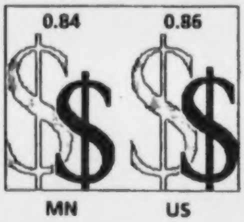
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



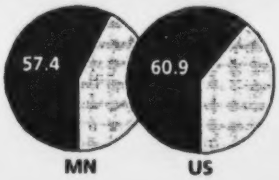
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



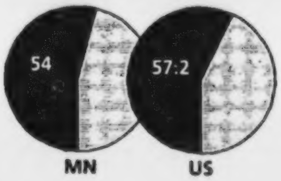
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



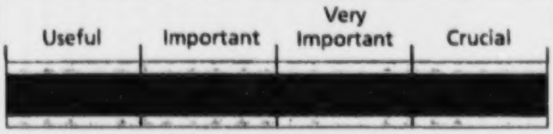
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



MISSISSIPPI – Rural education is more important in Mississippi than in any other state, and it ranks first in the nation in its urgent need for policy attention. One of only four states with a rural majority population, Mississippi ranks in the top 10 on four Importance indicators and in the top 20 on the other three. Rural poverty is high, rural schools and classes are relatively big, and teacher salaries low compared to the nation. Nearly half the rural teachers feel parents don't support their work, and rural classroom computer use is the third lowest in the nation.

PRIORITY RANKING

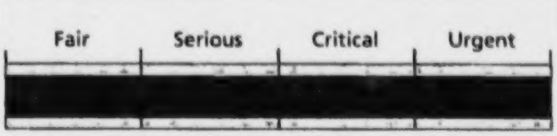
1



Importance Gauge

	MS	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	51.2%	4
Number of rural people	1,457,307	19
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	41.5%	18
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	39.7%	7
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	45.9%	5
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	13.9%	12
Percentage of rural children in poverty	23.8%	4

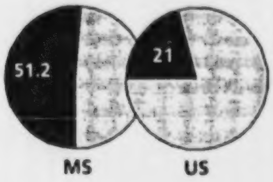
*** A rank of 1 is most important**

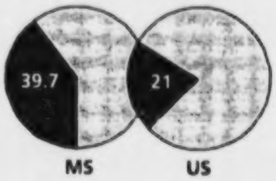


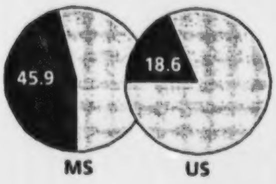
Urgency Gauge

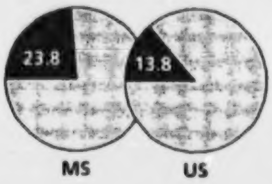
	MS	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$30,284	13
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.97	38
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	65.5%	1
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.3	14
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	60.2%	3
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.2%	36
Rural per capita income	$15,242	2
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	55.4%	14
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.8%	35
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	57.3%	21
Average number of students per grade	82.5	14
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	35.7%	24

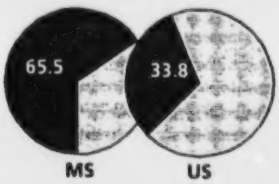
*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

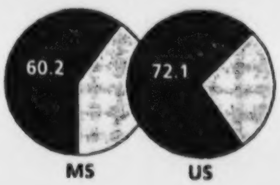

Percentage of population that is rural


Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools


Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities


Percentage of rural children in poverty

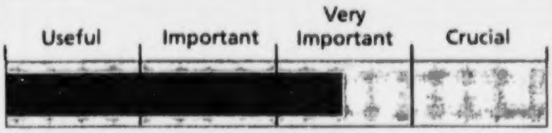

Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch


Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class

MISSOURI – Missouri ranks above the middle on six of seven Importance indicators, but not in the top ten on any of them. Its 1.7 million rural people and the high percentage of students in small rural schools combine to make rural education very important. With low per capita rural income and rural teacher salaries that are 7th worst in the nation and lag far behind Missouri's non-rural teachers, conditions in the Show-Me State's rural schools warrant serious policy attention.

PRIORITY RANKING

21

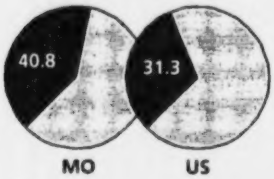


Importance Gauge

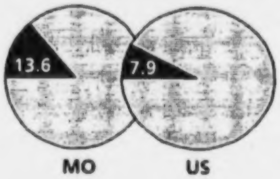
	MO	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	30.6%	21
Number of rural people	1,711,769	15
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	40.8%	19
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	26.4%	24
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.1%	41
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	13.6%	13
Percentage of rural children in poverty	15.1%	19

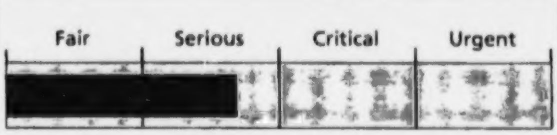
* A rank of 1 is most important

Percentage of public schools in rural areas



Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



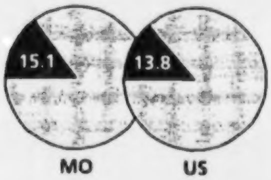


Urgency Gauge

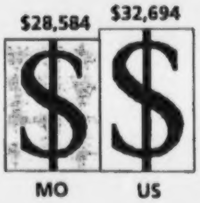
	MO	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$28,584	7
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.86	11
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	34.9%	23
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	12.9	38
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.3%	26
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	41
Rural per capita income	$17,264	15
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	61.9%	29
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.5%	23
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	59.0%	27
Average number of students per grade	45.7	35
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	30.3%	39

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

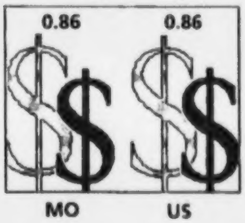
Percentage of rural children in poverty



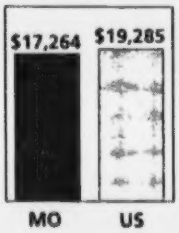
Average rural teacher's salary



Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



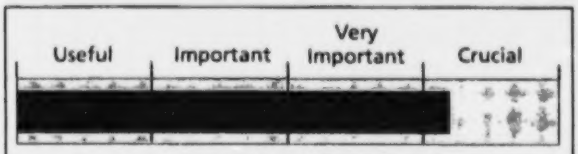
Rural per capita income



MONTANA – Montana ranks high in the percentage of schools in rural areas (2nd), students in rural schools (6th), people in rural communities (7th) and rural children in poverty (11th), making rural education crucially important. Rural teacher salaries are pitifully low, whether compared to rural teachers elsewhere or to other teachers in Montana. Most rural schools suffer chronic declining enrollment. But a high percentage of rural school spending gets to small classes in small schools, and teachers know parents support them.

PRIORITY RANKING

12

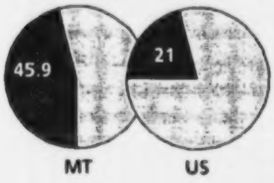


Importance Gauge

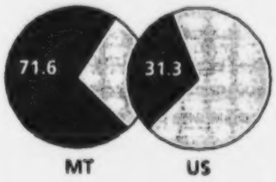
	MT	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	45.9%	7
Number of rural people	414,317	40
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	71.6%	2
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	42.4%	6
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	18.3%	20
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	9.1%	32
Percentage of rural children in poverty	18.1%	11

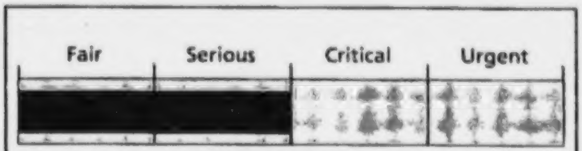
* A rank of 1 is most important

Percentage of population that is rural



Percentage of public schools in rural areas



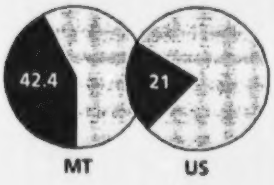


Urgency Gauge

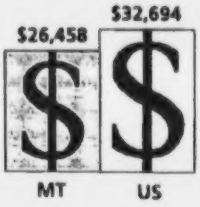
	MT	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$26,458	4
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.82	5
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	36.8%	20
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	11.3	45
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	79.0%	44
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.3%	34
Rural per capita income	$17,076	11
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	68.3%	41
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.9%	15
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	63.7%	46
Average number of students per grade	18.5	48
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	51.2%	3

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

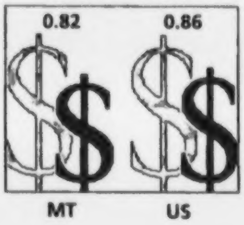
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



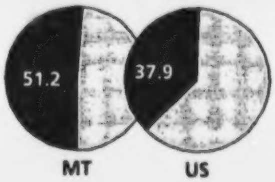
Average rural teacher's salary



Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



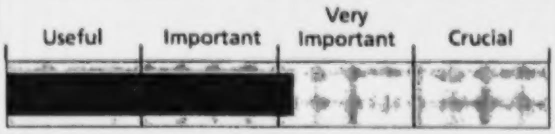
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



NEBRASKA – Rural education is very important in Nebraska, where many small rural schools educate one-third of the state's students in small classes. This keeps transportation and school level administration costs below the average for rural schools in the nation. Rural teacher salaries are second lowest in the nation, and the pay disparity between them and non-rural teachers is the worst in the nation. Teachers in these small community schools are second most likely in the nation to report feeling that parents support their work.

PRIORITY RANKING

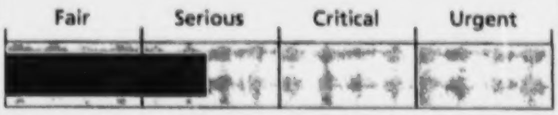
27



Importance Gauge

	NE	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	30.2%	22
Number of rural people	517,538	34
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	60.8%	6
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	32.5%	14
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	6.8%	34
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	11.6%	23
Percentage of rural children in poverty	12.0%	28

* A rank of 1 is most important

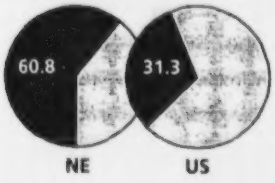


Urgency Gauge

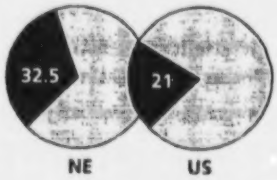
	NE	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$24,318	2
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.79	1
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	28.6%	29
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	10.4	47
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	77.3%	41
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.4%	24
Rural per capita income	$17,644	17
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	74.5%	49
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.2%	42
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.6%	35
Average number of students per grade	17.5	49
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	47.6%	7

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

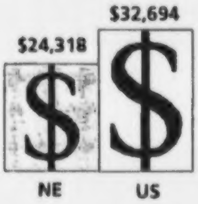
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



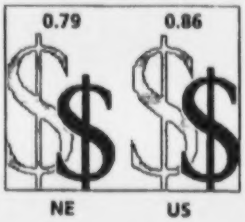
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



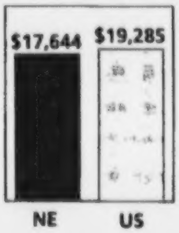
Average rural teacher's salary



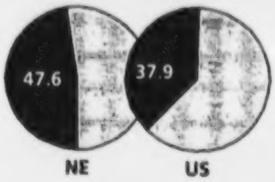
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



Rural per capita income



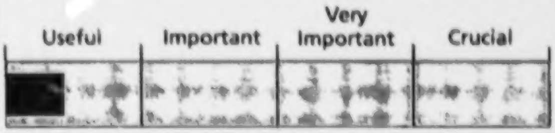
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



PRIORITY RANKING

46

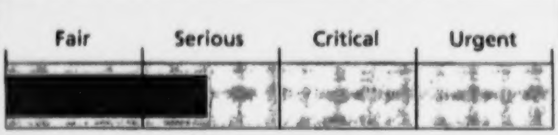
NEVADA – Nevada is demographically one of the most urban states, ranking low in percentage of people in rural communities (48th), students in rural schools (48th), number of rural people (47th), and students in small rural schools (45th). One-quarter of the state's rural students are minorities and more than half the rural schools suffer declining enrollment, the second highest rate in the nation. Nevada is one of the few states where rural teachers earn more than other teachers.



Importance Gauge

	NV	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	8.5%	48
Number of rural people	169,611	47
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	24.8%	38
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.7%	48
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	25.0%	16
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	5.9%	45
Percentage of rural children in poverty	10.6%	34

* A rank of 1 is most important

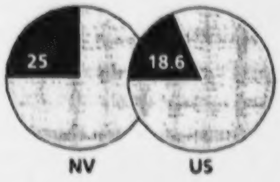


Urgency Gauge

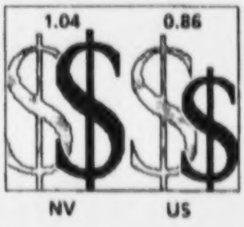
	NV	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$39,635	40
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.04	50
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	27.0%	31
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.4	18
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	70.0%	22
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	2.0%	3
Rural per capita income	$24,349	44
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	57.1%	17
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.4%	25
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	59.6%	29
Average number of students per grade	61.6	25
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	55.8%	2

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

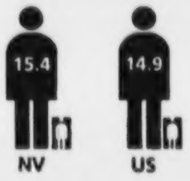
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



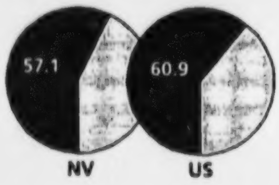
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



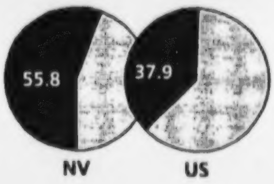
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



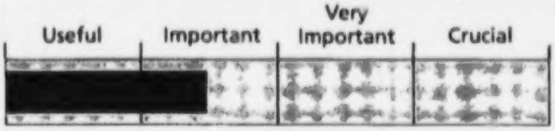
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



NEW HAMPSHIRE – The Granite State ranks high in the percentage of people, students, and schools in rural communities, but ranks above the median on only two Urgency indicators: the average number of rural students per grade and use of computers in the classroom. With high per capita income and low poverty rates in rural communities, and above-average rural teacher salaries that are close to the salaries of other New Hampshire teachers, the state's rural schools are on relatively solid ground.

PRIORITY RANKING

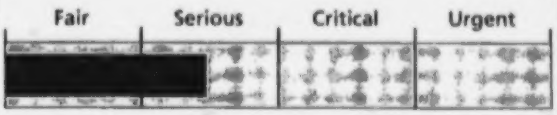
40



Importance Gauge

	NH	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	40.7%	11
Number of rural people	503,451	35
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	44.7%	14
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	34.9%	11
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.1%	49
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	8.9%	34
Percentage of rural children in poverty	5.5%	46

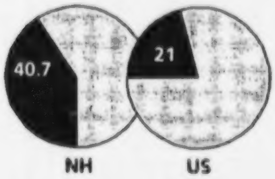
* A rank of 1 is most important

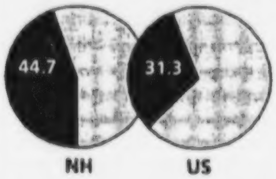


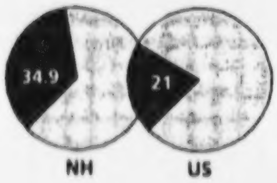
Urgency Gauge

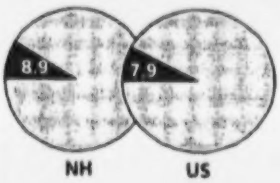
	NH	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$35,675	33
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.96	33
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	11.7%	44
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.4	28
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	67.0%	11
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.2%	39
Rural per capita income	$24,055	43
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	60.8%	26
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.1%	31
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.1%	30
Average number of students per grade	62.6	23
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	30.9%	36

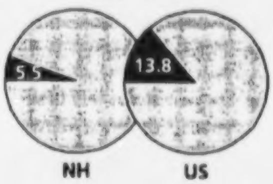
* A rank of 1 is most urgent

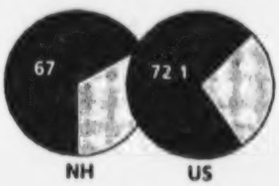

Percentage of population that is rural


Percentage of public schools in rural areas


Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools


Percentage of all students attending small rural schools

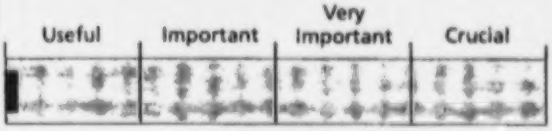

Percentage of rural children in poverty


Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class

NEW JERSEY – It is useful for policymakers to think about rural education in the Garden State, since it has more rural people than Idaho, New Mexico, or Montana. But it ranks near the bottom among states in the percentage of students in rural schools (47th), of schools in rural communities (49th), people in rural places (49th), and students in small rural schools (50th). It has the highest rural teacher salaries in the nation, but its rural schools are among the nation's largest and a lot of rural school money never makes it to the classroom.

PRIORITY RANKING

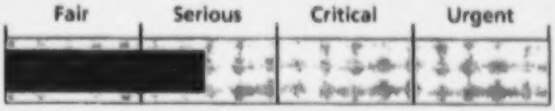
47



Importance Gauge

	NJ	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	5.6%	49
Number of rural people	475,263	36
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	12.4%	49
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.9%	47
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	15.3%	24
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	3.0%	50
Percentage of rural children in poverty	4.7%	47

* A rank of 1 is most important

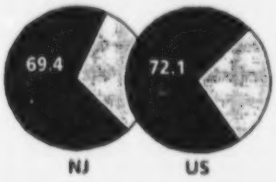


Urgency Gauge

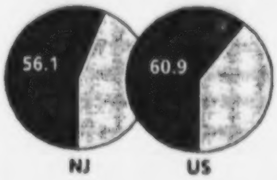
	NJ	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$49,872	50
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.97	40
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	12.8%	43
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.5	27
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	69.4%	20
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.5%	22
Rural per capita income	$30,905	49
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	56.1%	15
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.8%	4
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	55.1%	16
Average number of students per grade	110.7	4
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	18.4%	49

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

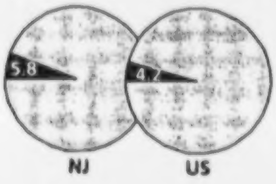
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



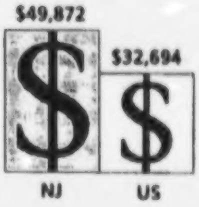
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



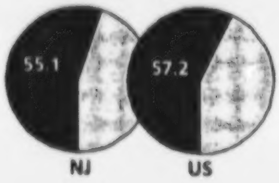
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



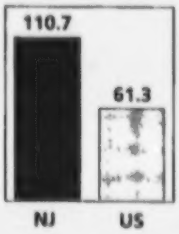
Average rural teacher's salary



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



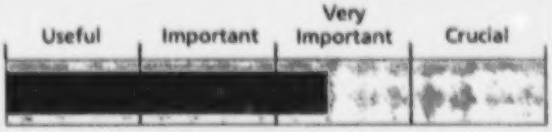
Average number of students per grade



NEW MEXICO – Ranked first in rural child poverty, second in percentage of rural minority students, and third lowest in rural per capita income, rural education in New Mexico is crucially important and in critical need of policy attention. Nearly half the rural schools suffer from declining enrollment, but both schools and classes are small and use of computers in the classroom extensive. New Mexico is one of the few states where rural teachers earn more than others, though the salaries are only moderate.

PRIORITY RANKING

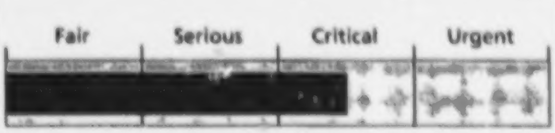
16



Importance Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	25.0%	30
Number of rural people	455,545	37
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	37.3%	24
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.7%	34
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	72.7%	2
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	10.5%	27
Percentage of rural children in poverty	28.0%	1

* A rank of 1 is most important

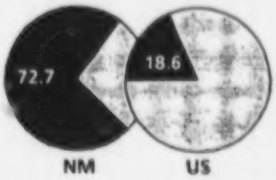


Urgency Gauge

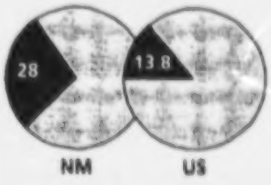
	NM	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$32,307	19
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.01	47
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	63.6%	2
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	11.8	43
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	80.0%	45
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.5%	23
Rural per capita income	$15,413	3
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	55.2%	13
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.9%	3
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	55.6%	18
Average number of students per grade	33.3	43
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	45.4%	13

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

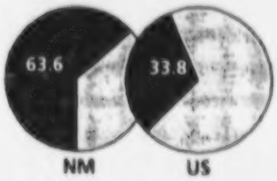
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



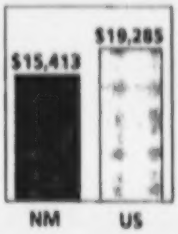
Percentage of rural children in poverty



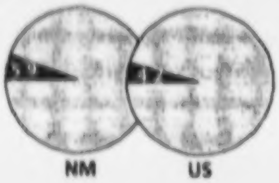
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



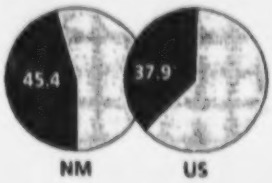
Rural per capita income



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



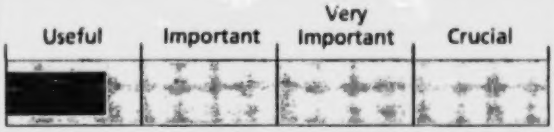
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



NEW YORK – Home to nearly 2.4 million rural people, New York nonetheless ranks low in percentage of people living in rural communities (39th), schools in rural places (45th), students in rural schools (44th) and in small rural schools (39th). But it ranks near the top in many Urgency indicators, including transportation spending (9th), the rural teacher pay gap (7th), low level of computer use in the classroom (5th), and distorted spending on school-level administration (5th), warranting serious need for policy attention to rural education.

PRIORITY RANKING

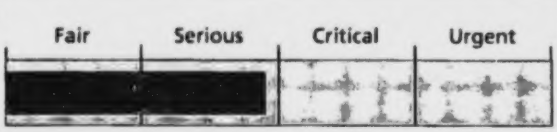
41



Importance Gauge

	NY	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	12.5%	39
Number of rural people	2,373,875	6
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	18.9%	45
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	13.6%	44
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	5.7%	36
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.4%	39
Percentage of rural children in poverty	10.9%	32

* A rank of 1 is most important

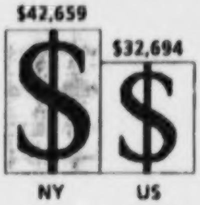


Urgency Gauge

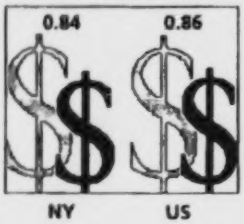
	NY	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$42,659	46
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.84	7
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	25.0%	32
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.4	35
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	62.2%	5
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-1.7%	5
Rural per capita income	$20,936	37
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	60.3%	24
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.4%	9
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.3%	31
Average number of students per grade	63.4	21
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	30.8%	37

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

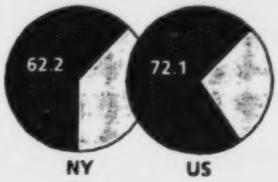
Average rural teacher's salary



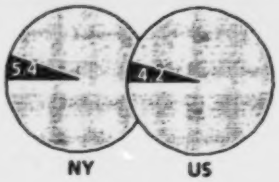
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



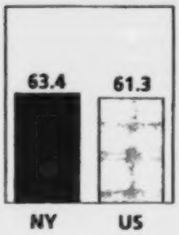
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



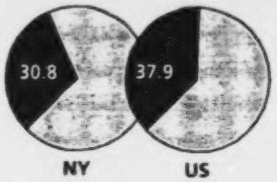
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



Average number of students per grade



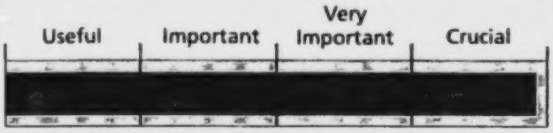
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



NORTH CAROLINA – Rural education is crucially important in North Carolina, which has the second largest rural population in the nation and the eighth largest percentage of its students in rural schools, nearly a third of them minorities and nearly two-fifths of them eligible for subsidized lunches. Rural schools are relatively large, spending on school administration is high, and most teachers don't think parents support them. The state is in critical need of policy attention to its rural schools.

PRIORITY RANKING

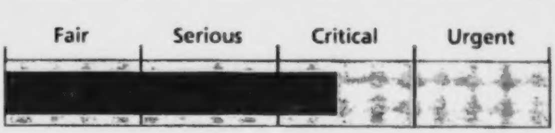
6



Importance Gauge

	NC	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	39.8%	12
Number of rural people	3,199,831	2
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	42.1%	17
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	39.5%	8
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.1%	11
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	13.3%	14
Percentage of rural children in poverty	14.7%	21

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

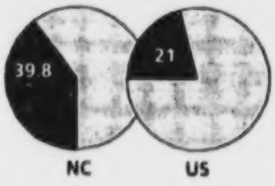


Urgency Gauge

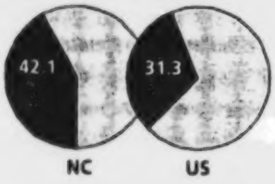
	NC	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,964	27
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.02	48
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	38.6%	16
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.0	20
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	73.6%	33
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.9%	13
Rural per capita income	$18,311	19
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	54.7%	12
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	2.8%	44
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.7%	37
Average number of students per grade	101.3	7
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	43.1%	15

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

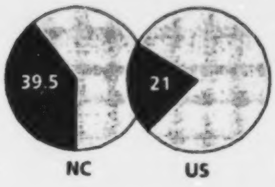
Percentage of population that is rural



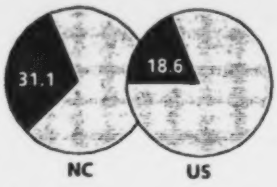
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



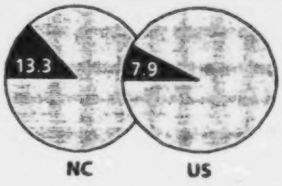
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



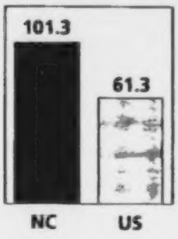
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



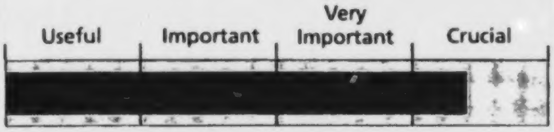
Average number of students per grade



NORTH DAKOTA – Rural education is crucial in North Dakota, which ranks in the top 10 in percentage of schools in rural communities (3rd), students in rural schools (4th), students in smallrural schools (6th), and people living in rural communities (10th). Rural per capita income is low and over half the rural schools have chronic declining enrollment.The share of rural school expenditures that gets into the classroom is low, largely because rural teacher salaries are third lowest in the nation and well below other North Dakota teachers.The need for policy attention is urgent.

PRIORITY RANKING

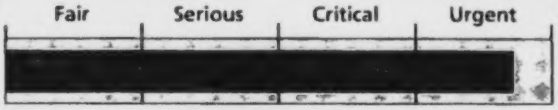
4



Importance Gauge

	ND	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	44.1%	10
Number of rural people	283,242	43
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	71.2%	3
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	46.0%	4
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	19.7%	19
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	15.5%	6
Percentage of rural children in poverty	15.5%	17

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

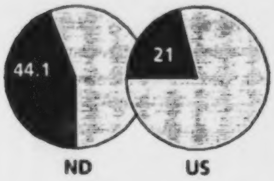


Urgency Gauge

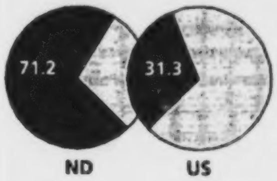
	ND	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$24,395	3
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.86	12
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	36.9%	19
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	11.0	46
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.4%	27
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.9%	14
Rural per capita income	$16,555	9
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	67.6%	38
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.7%	6
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	52.7%	8
Average number of students per grade	20.1	46
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	53.0%	3

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

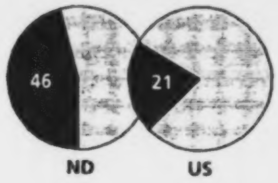
Percentage of population that is rural



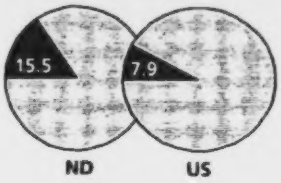
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



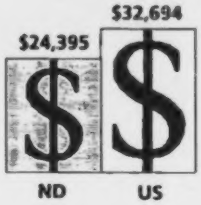
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



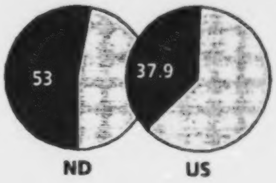
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Average rural teacher's salary



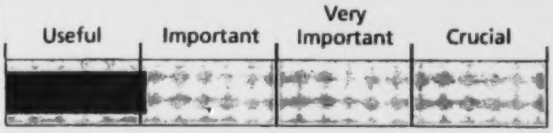
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



OHIO – Ohio has plenty of rural people (more than 2.5 million), but it ranks low on all other Importance indicators. Its rural schools are fairly large and their classes larger; spending on rural school administration is relatively high; and teacher perceptions of parental support are low. Rural teacher pay is decidedly lower than salaries of other Ohio teachers. All this indicates an urgent need for policy attention, with Ohio ranking 11th nationwide on the Urgency Gauge.

PRIORITY RANKING

28

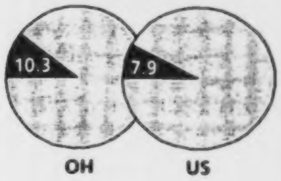


Importance Gauge

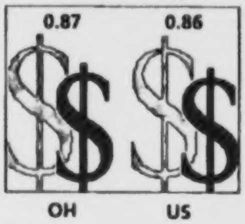
	OH	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	22.6%	32
Number of rural people	2,570,811	4
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	30.1%	35
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	25.0%	30
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.5%	48
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	10.3%	29
Percentage of rural children in poverty	9.7%	36

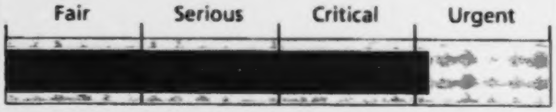
*** A rank of 1 is most important**

Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



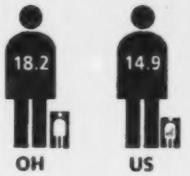


Urgency Gauge

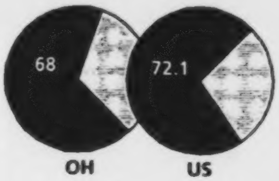
	OH	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$35,187	31
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.87	14
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	21.0%	36
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	18.2	3
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	68.0%	14
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.9%	11
Rural per capita income	$20,017	27
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	51.6%	8
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.6%	21
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	56.6%	20
Average number of students per grade	75.3	17
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	26.7%	42

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

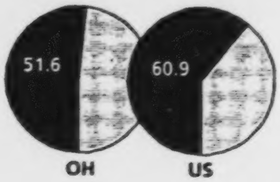
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



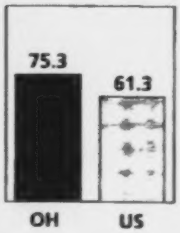
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



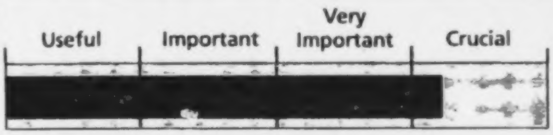
Average number of students per grade



OKLAHOMA – Rural education is crucially important in Oklahoma, a state that ranks high in percentage of schools in rural communities (16th), students in small rural schools (10th), and minority rural students (10th). Rural per capita income is low, and child poverty rates are high. The good news is that rural teachers are paid the same, on average, as non-rural teachers; the bad news is that rural teacher salaries are ranked 10th lowest in the nation.

PRIORITY RANKING

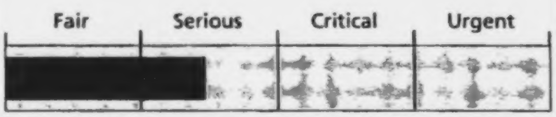
18



Importance Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	34.7%	17
Number of rural people	1,196,091	23
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	43.4%	16
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	25.5%	28
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.6%	10
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	14.2%	10
Percentage of rural children in poverty	17.6	13

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

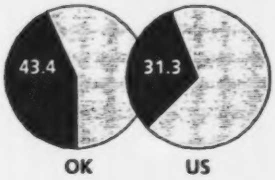


Urgency Gauge

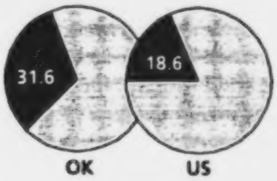
	OK	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$29,024	10
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.00	44
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	54.0%	5
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.7	31
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	74.1%	35
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	45
Rural per capita income	$16,256	7
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	0.6%	31
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.6%	39
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.8%	39
Average number of students per grade	33.0	44
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	30.6%	38

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

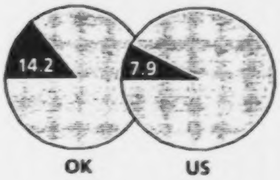
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



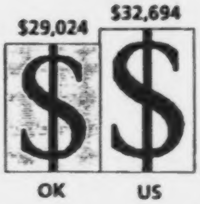
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



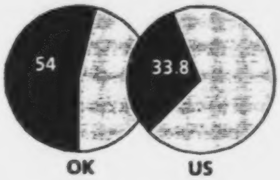
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



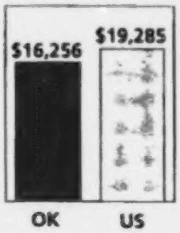
Average rural teacher's salary



Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



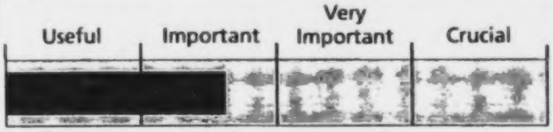
Rural per capita income



OREGON – Over one-third of Oregon's schools are in rural communities, but they serve only one-fifth of the students, average well under 50 students per grade, and nearly half suffer long term declining enrollment. The percentage of rural school expenditures going to school-level administration is high, as is the proportion that goes to fund transportation. Rural class sizes are small (ranked 8th among states). There is a critical need for policymakers to address rural school issues.

PRIORITY RANKING

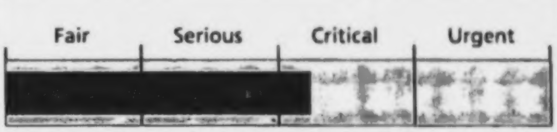
29



Importance Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	21.3%	33
Number of rural people	727,255	30
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	36.7%	26
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.4%	35
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	14.6%	25
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	11.9%	21
Percentage of rural children in poverty	11.7%	29

* A rank of 1 is most important

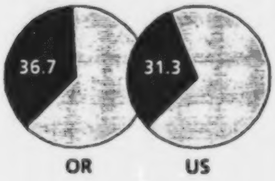


Urgency Gauge

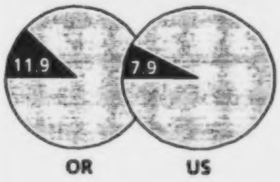
	OR	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$36,409	35
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.92	24
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	38.3%	18
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	17.2	8
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.5%	28
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	1.7%	4
Rural per capita income	$21,033	39
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	60.8%	25
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.4%	10
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.4%	32
Average number of students per grade	41.7	38
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	45.1%	14

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

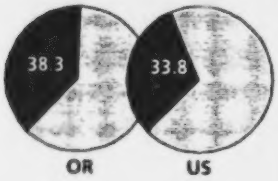
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



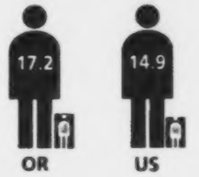
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



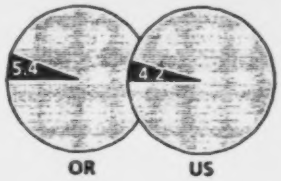
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



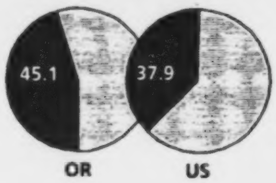
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



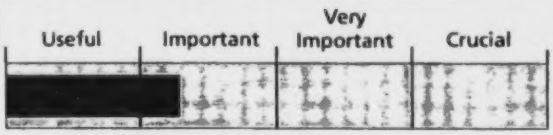
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



PENNSYLVANIA – With the third largest rural population in the nation, rural education cannot help but be important in Pennsylvania. Still, rural people constitute less than one-third of this urban state. Rural teachers are well paid compared to other states, but they earn only 84 cents on the dollar compared to other Pennsylvania teachers. Rural schools and classes are fairly big, the percentage of expenditures getting to the classrooms low, and transportation spending high, but school-level administration expenditures are low. There is an urgent need for policy attention to rural schools.

PRIORITY RANKING

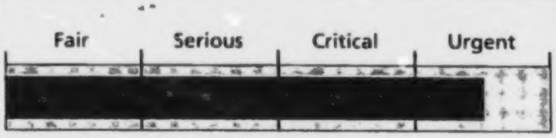
24



Importance Gauge

	PA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	22.9%	31
Number of rural people	2,816,953	3
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	30.1%	34
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	25.8%	26
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.1%	40
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	8.7%	36
Percentage of rural children in poverty	10.7%	33

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

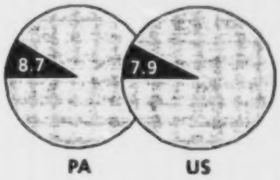


Urgency Gauge

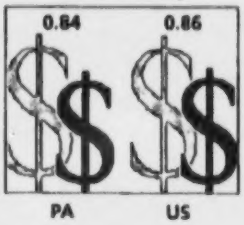
	PA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$41,182	44
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.84	8
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	20.85	37
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.5	11
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	69.25	19
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-1.2%	8
Rural per capita income	$19,380	25
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	57.5%	19
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.8%	5
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	54.5%	15
Average number of students per grade	92.2	13
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	34.1%	27

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

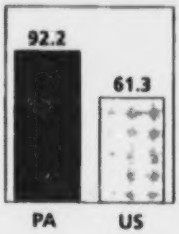
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



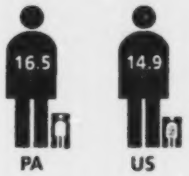
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



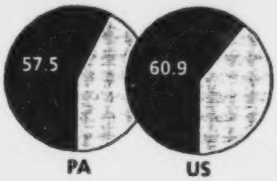
Average number of students per grade



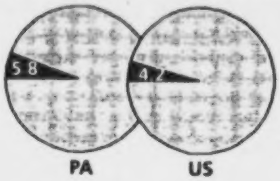
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



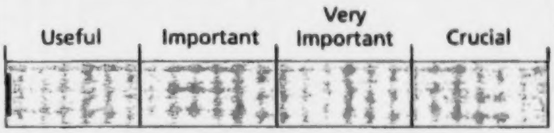
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



RHODE ISLAND – Our least rural state, Rhode Island has fewer than 100,000 rural people and they enjoy the fourth highest rural per capita income in the nation. Rural schools are big. The percentage of rural school expenditures that gets into the classroom is second highest in the nation (despite the 8th highest proportion of spending on transportation). Rural teacher salaries are among the highest in the nation. Overall, the Ocean State ranks 50th on both the Importance and the Urgency gauges.

PRIORITY RANKING

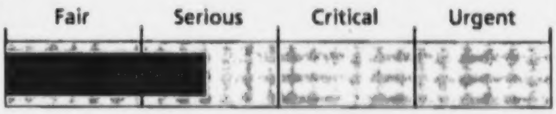
50



Importance Gauge

	RI	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	9.1%	45
Number of rural people	95,173	50
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	15.0%	48
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	14.7%	42
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.2%	39
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	4.1%	48
Percentage of rural children in poverty	4.7	48

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

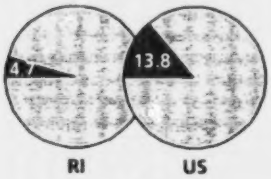


Urgency Gauge

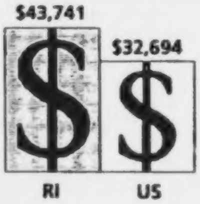
	RI	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$43,741	47
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.94	29
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	12.8%	42
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.6	25
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	71.7%	30
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.2%	37
Rural per capita income	$26,925	47
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	76.1%	50
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	5.4%	8
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	69.6%	49
Average number of students per grade	100.4	8
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	31.7	34

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

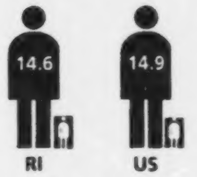
Percentage of rural children in poverty



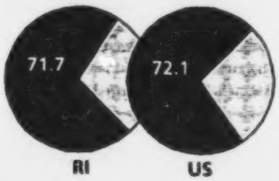
Average rural teacher's salary



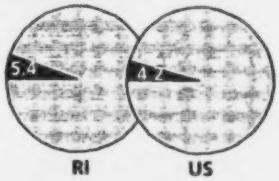
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



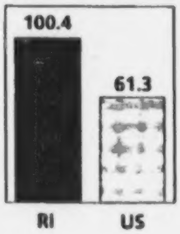
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



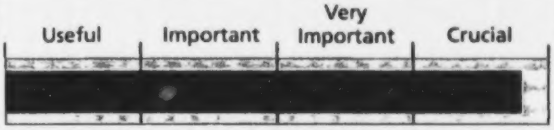
Average number of students per grade



SOUTH CAROLINA – South Carolina ranks near the top among states in the percentage of rural population, rural students, rural minority students, students in small rural schools, and rural children in poverty. Rural schools and classes are big, computer use in the classroom relatively low, and many rural teachers do not feel parents support them. Rural salaries are near the median for rural teachers in other states, but similar to non-rural teachers in South Carolina,who are paid poorly compared to counterparts elsewhere.

PRIORITY RANKING

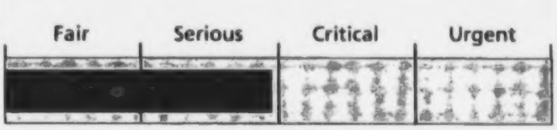
9



Importance Gauge

	SC	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	39.5%	13
Number of rural people	1,584,888	17
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	38.7%	22
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	33.4%	12
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	41.7%	6
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	14.0%	11
Percentage of rural children in poverty	18.0%	12

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

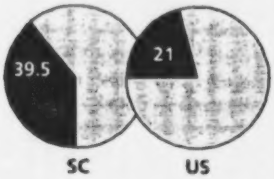


Urgency Gauge

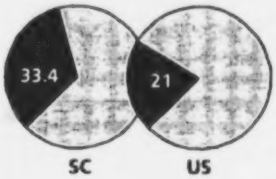
	SC	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$35,083	30
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.03	49
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	50.7%	8
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	15.2	19
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	68.0%	13
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.3%	33
Rural per capita income	$17,106	13
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	56.2%	16
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	2.1%	48
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	59.1%	28
Average number of students per grade	99.1	9
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	20.6%	48

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

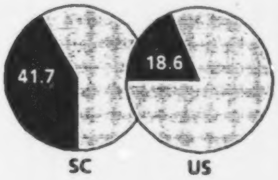
Percentage of population that is rural



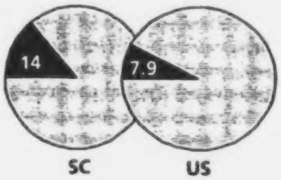
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



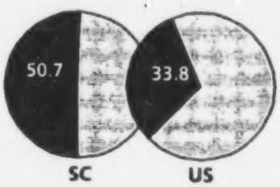
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



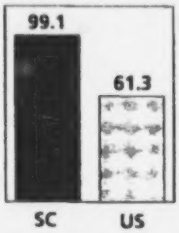
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



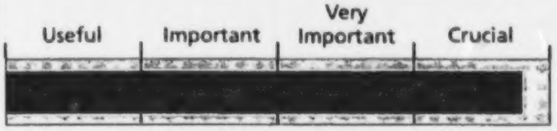
Average number of students per grade



SOUTH DAKOTA – Rural education is crucially important, and the need for policy attention urgent in a state that ranks first in the percentage of rural schools and has more students in rural communities than most other states. South Dakota ranks high in rural child poverty (8th) and rural minority students (15th). Rural schools and classes are small, and a high percentage of school spending gets to the classroom. However, South Dakota's rural teachers are the worst paid in the nation, and earn far less than other South Dakota teachers.

PRIORITY RANKING

5

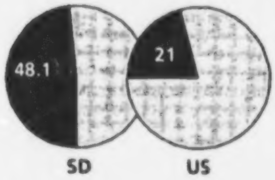


Importance Gauge

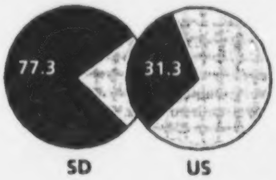
	SD	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	48.1%	5
Number of rural people	363,417	42
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	77.3%	1
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	46.8%	3
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	25.4%	15
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	12.0%	19
Percentage of rural children in poverty	19.8%	8

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

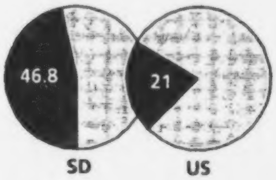
Percentage of population that is rural



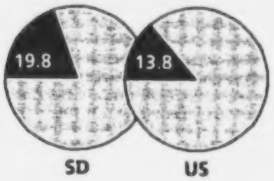
Percentage of public schools in rural areas

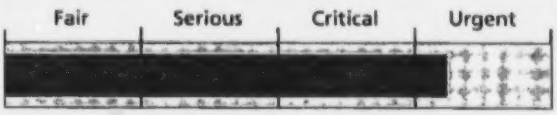


Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



Percentage of rural children in poverty



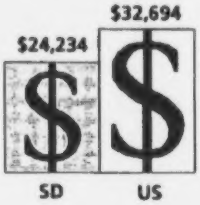


Urgency Gauge

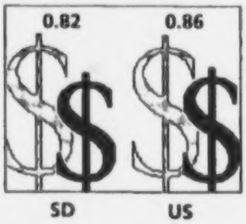
	SD	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$24,234	1
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.82	4
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	36.2%	21
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	11.4	44
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	77.9%	43
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-1.0%	9
Rural per capita income	$16,272	8
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	60.2%	23
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.7%	37
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	54.5%	14
Average number of students per grade	19.1	47
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	46.2%	11

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

Average rural teacher's salary



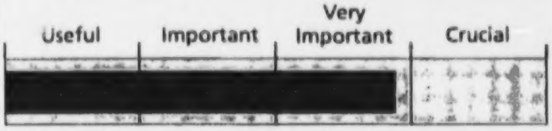
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



TENNESSEE – With two million rural people totaling more than one-third of the population, rural Tennessee hosts one-third of the state's schools and one-quarter of its students. Those schools get as much money as possible into the classroom, spending sparingly on school administration and transportation. But on average they are fairly big, make less use of classroom computers than rural schools elsewhere, and have low teachers' salaries, compared to other states or elsewhere in Tennessee. These factors make rural education very important, and the need for policy attention critical.

PRIORITY RANKING

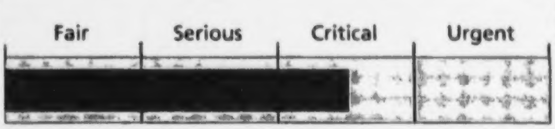
11



Importance Gauge

	TN	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	36.4%	15
Number of rural people	2,069,265	8
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	34.3%	29
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	28.9%	21
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	N/A	N/A
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	11.6%	22
Percentage of rural children in poverty	14.7%	21

* A rank of 1 is most important

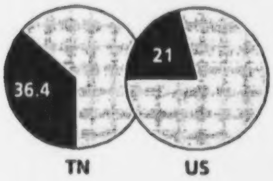


Urgency Gauge

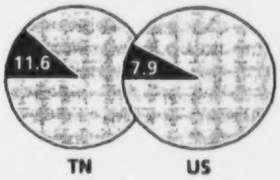
	TN	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$30,951	15
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.88	15
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	64.1%	6
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.9%	12
Rural per capita income	$17,667	18
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	58.9%	22
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	3.4%	40
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	61.4%	43
Average number of students per grade	71.5	18
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	28.0%	40

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

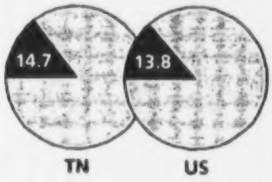
Percentage of population that is rural



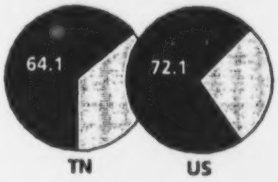
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



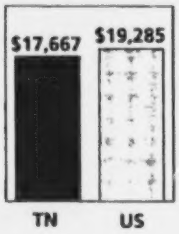
Percentage of rural children in poverty



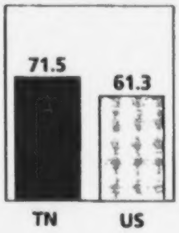
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Rural per capita income



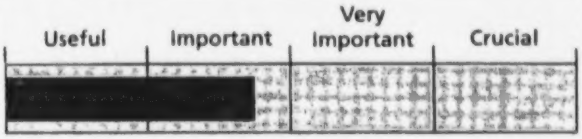
Average number of students per grade



PRIORITY RANKING

35

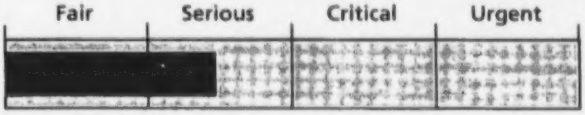
TEXAS – More rural people live in Texas than in any other state, but they are a small demographic minority nonetheless, accounting for less than one-fifth of the population. But rural child poverty and minority rates are high, making rural education especially important in Texas. Despite low spending on school administration and transportation, moderate school size, and no better than average teacher salaries, the proportion of school spending that gets into the classroom is quite low.



Importance Gauge

	TX	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	17.5%	36
Number of rural people	3,647,539	1
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	23.2%	40
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	13.8%	43
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	34.8%	8
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.4%	40
Percentage of rural children in poverty	16.3	15

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

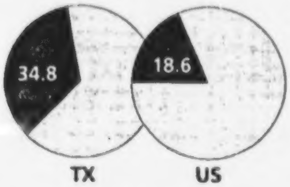


Urgency Gauge

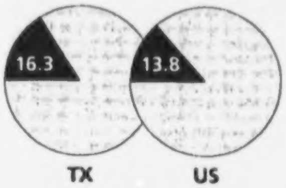
	TX	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$33,979	28
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.93	25
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	39.4%	14
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.4	36
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	74.0%	34
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.6%	18
Rural per capita income	$18,471	21
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	62.4%	32
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	2.5%	46
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	54.2%	13
Average number of students per grade	60.8	26
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	27.1%	41

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

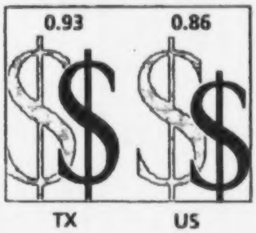
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



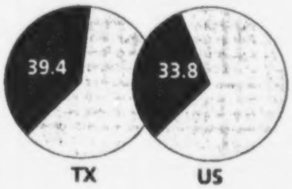
Percentage of rural children in poverty



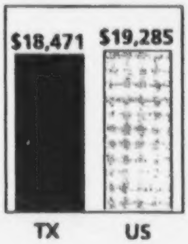
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



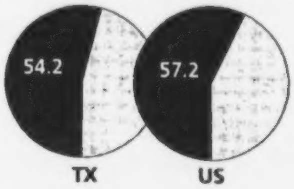
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Rural per capita income



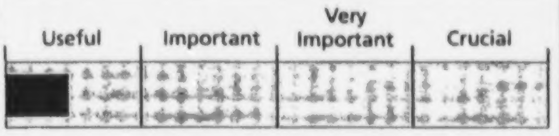
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



UTAH – Demographically among the most urban states, Utah ranks below the median on every Importance indicator. But it is critical that policymakers pay attention to rural education in Utah, with its low rural per capita income, and relatively high rural child poverty and subsidized lunch eligibility rates. Rural teacher salaries are the 11th lowest in the nation, only one state has larger class sizes, and nearly half of rural schools are steadily losing enrollment.

PRIORITY RANKING

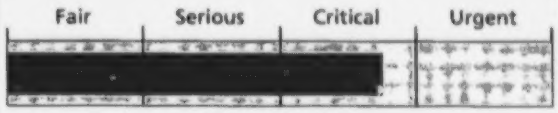
43



Importance Gauge

	UT	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	11.8%	43
Number of rural people	262,825	44
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	24.5%	39
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	13.0%	46
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	10.8%	29
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	7.3%	41
Percentage of rural children in poverty	12.1%	26

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

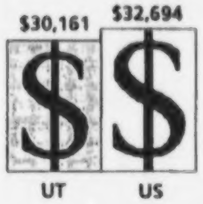


Urgency Gauge

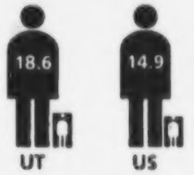
	UT	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$30,161	11
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.93	26
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	33.9%	24
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	18.6	2
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	69.2%	18
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.6%	20
Rural per capita income	$17,085	12
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	64.2%	35
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.4%	25
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.5%	34
Average number of students per grade	59.9	28
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	46.1%	12

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

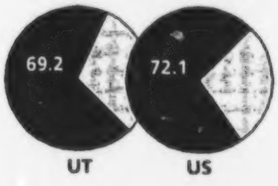
Average rural teacher's salary



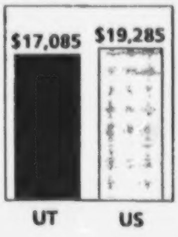
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



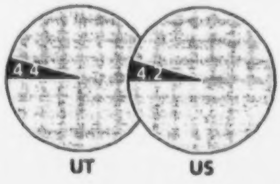
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



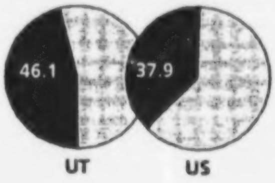
Rural per capita income



Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



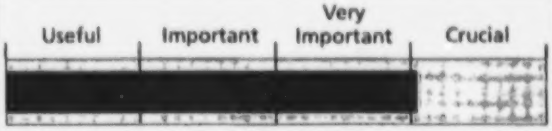
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



VERMONT – A higher percentage of Vermonters and their public school students live in rural communities than any other state, and it is near the top in the percentage of schools in rural communities (4th) and students in small rural schools (3rd). With schools in so many villages, transportation costs are very low, but so are school-level administrative costs. Still the share of the rural education dollar that gets to the classroom is 11th lowest nationally, perhaps because teacher salaries are moderately low.

PRIORITY RANKING

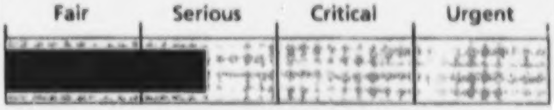
20



Importance Gauge

	VT	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	61.8%	1
Number of rural people	376,379	41
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	68.9%	4
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	56.1%	1
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	3.1%	44
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	17.3%	3
Percentage of rural children in poverty	9.7%	37

* A rank of 1 is most important

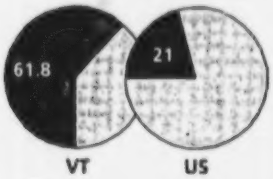


Urgency Gauge

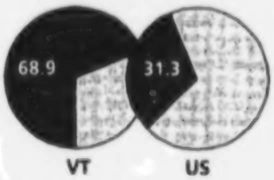
	VT	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$31,739	18
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.89	17
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	23.2%	35
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	11.9	42
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	68.9%	17
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.1%	44
Rural per capita income	$21,205	40
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	69.4%	44
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	2.7%	45
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	53.8%	11
Average number of students per grade	34.3	42
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	43.1%	16

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

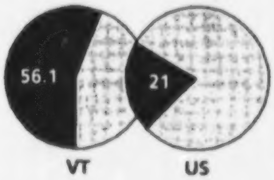
Percentage of population that is rural



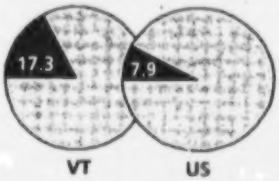
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



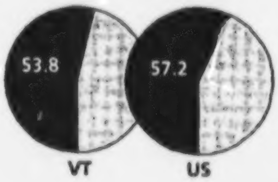
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



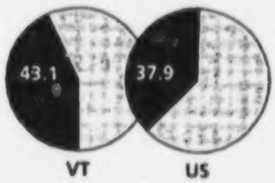
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



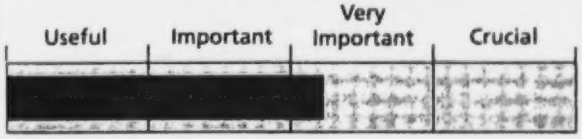
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



VIRGINIA – With 1.9 million rural people and a substantial number of rural minority students, rural education in Virginia is very important. Rural schools and classes tend to be much larger than in most states, and rural teachers are paid below average, especially compared to other Virginia teachers. Nearly half the rural teachers feel that parents do not support their work. It is critical that policymakers give rural education in Virginia their attention.

PRIORITY RANKING

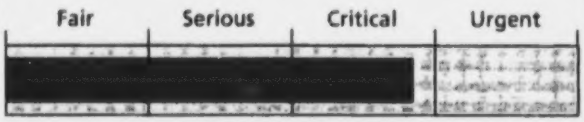
15



Importance Gauge

	VA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	27.0%	28
Number of rural people	1,908,560	10
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	34.7%	28
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	28.2%	22
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	22.4%	18
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	10.9%	25
Percentage of rural children in poverty	12.1%	27

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

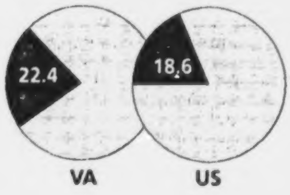


Urgency Gauge

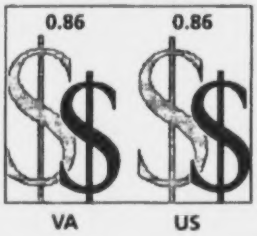
	VA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$32,366	20
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.86	10
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	29.1%	27
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	16.7	9
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	68.5%	15
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.4%	25
Rural per capita income	$20,415	32
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	54.4%	11
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.7%	20
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	60.9%	40
Average number of students per grade	98.1	10
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000	25.5%	44

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

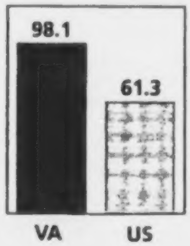
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities



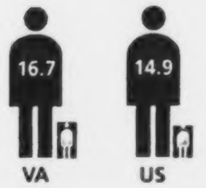
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



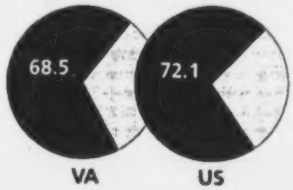
Average number of students per grade



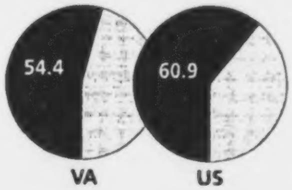
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support



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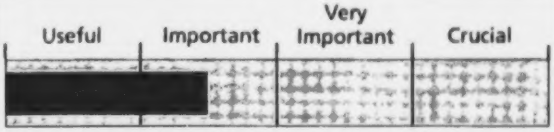
WASHINGTON – The number of rural Washingtonians (over one million) warrant the attention of policymakers despite moderate to low rankings on most indicators. Rural teachers are paid moderately well and on par with other teachers in the state, but they have more students than most rural teachers in other states.

PRIORITY RANKING

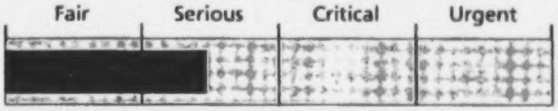
39



Importance Gauge

	WA	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	18.0%	35
Number of rural people	1,063,015	25
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	32.8%	31
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	22.7%	32
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	17.5%	23
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	10.4%	28
Percentage of rural children in poverty	13.0%	25

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

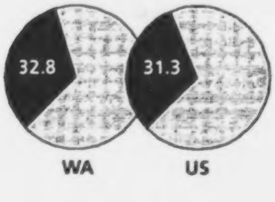


Urgency Gauge

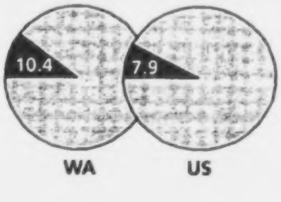
	WA	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$38,923	38
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	1.00	46
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	17.3	7
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	76.6%	39
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.2%	35
Rural per capita income	$20,985	38
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	61.5%	27
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.0%	32
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	56.1%	19
Average number of students per grade	62.9	22
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	39.5%	20

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

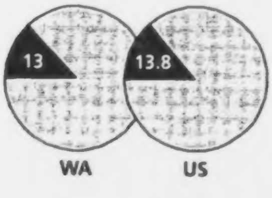
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



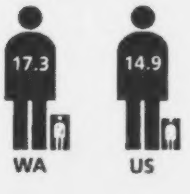
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



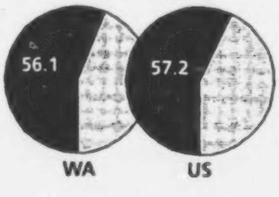
Percentage of rural children in poverty



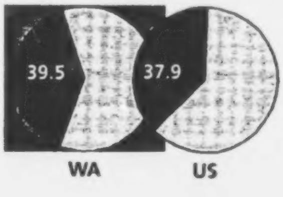
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio



Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



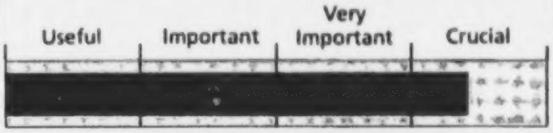
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000



WEST VIRGINIA – Among the top 10 states in percentage of people in rural communities (3rd), rural children in poverty (3rd), students in rural schools (5th), schools in rural communities (8th), and students in small rural schools (9th), rural education is crucially important in West Virginia, and is in urgent need of policy attention. It has the lowest rural per capita income in the nation and spends more of its rural education dollar busing kids around than any other state. Still, rural school administrative costs are average and money getting to the classroom is above median.

PRIORITY RANKING

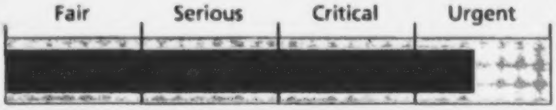
8



Importance Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	53.9%	3
Number of rural people	975,564	26
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	53.8	8
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	45.8%	5
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.6%	46
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	14.7%	9
Percentage of rural children in poverty	24.7%	3

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

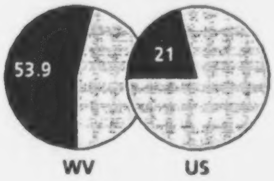


Urgency Gauge

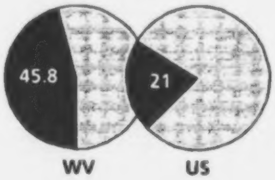
	WV	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$32,916	22
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.95	31
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	56.8%	3
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	13.9	30
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	80.2%	48
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.0%	48
Rural per capita income	$15,177	1
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	58.3%	21
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	6.4%	1
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	61.2%	41
Average number of students per grade	52.1	29
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	40.4%	18

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

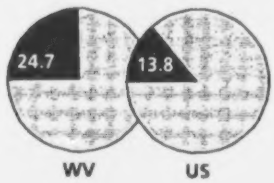
Percentage of population that is rural



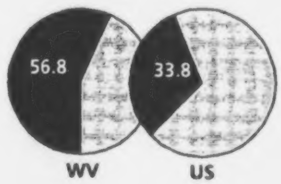
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools



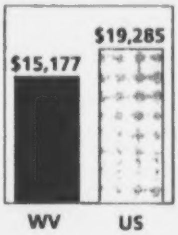
Percentage of rural children in poverty



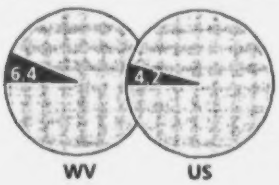
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Rural per capita income



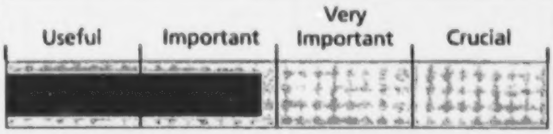
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation



PRIORITY RANKING

33

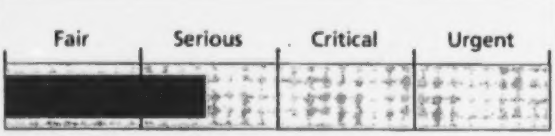
WISCONSIN – More than 1.7 million people live in rural Wisconsin (ranked 16th) and a relatively high percentage of the state's students are in small rural schools (15th). Overall, rural schools are typically small, but their transportation costs are near the median and school administration costs well below the median. Teacher salaries are above median nationally, although well below other teachers in the state. Wisconsin reports one of the highest rates of computer use in the rural classroom.



Importance Gauge

	WI	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	31.7%	20
Number of rural people	1,700,032	16
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	38.9%	20
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	25.7%	27
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	5.1%	37
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	13.2%	15
Percentage of rural children in poverty	7.9%	43

*** A rank of 1 is most important**

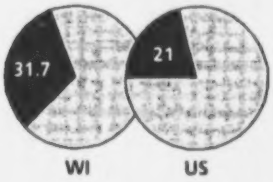


Urgency Gauge

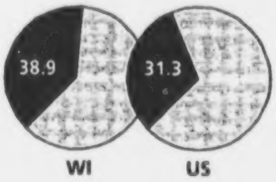
	WI	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$35,330	32
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.89	18
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	20.8%	38
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	14.6	26
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	77.5%	42
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	-0.7%	15
Rural per capita income	$20,496	33
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	61.8%	28
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.2%	30
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	55.2%	17
Average number of students per grade	50.4	32
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	34.1	30

*** A rank of 1 is most urgent**

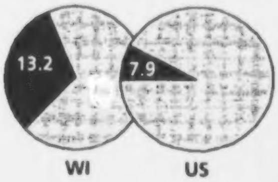
Percentage of population that is rural



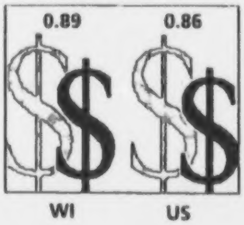
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



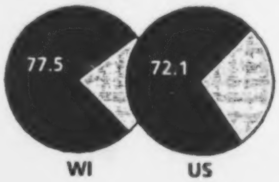
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



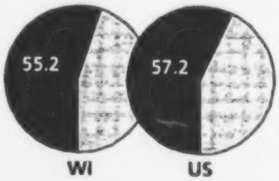
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary



Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class



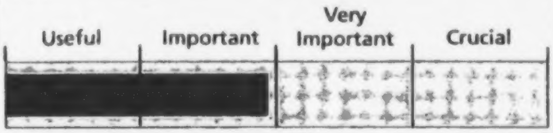
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support



WYOMING – A small urban population means that Wyoming's 172,438 rural people (ranked 46th) constitute more than one-third of the state's population (ranked 16th) and supply students for nearly half the state's schools. Small schools, small classes, lots of computer use, and strong parental support for teachers are characteristic of rural education in Wyoming. But teachers are paid much worse than rural teachers in most other states, or other teachers in Wyoming. Nearly half the rural schools endure continuing declining enrollment.

PRIORITY RANKING

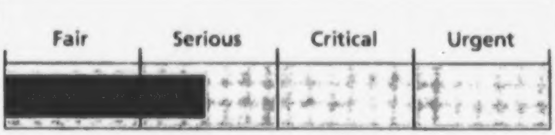
30



Importance Gauge

	WY	Rank*
Percentage of state's population that is rural	34.9%	16
Number of rural people	172,438	16
Percentage of public schools in rural areas	48.5%	11
Percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools	22.9%	31
Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	13.1%	28
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools	12.3%	18
Percentage of rural children in poverty	13.5%	24

* A rank of 1 is most important

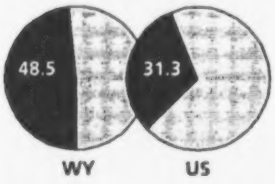


Urgency Gauge

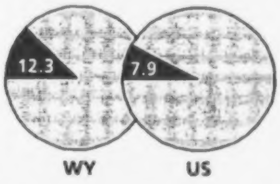
	WY	Rank*
Average rural teacher's salary	$28,644	9
Ratio of rural to non-rural teacher salary	0.90	22
Percentage of rural students who are free or reduced-price lunch eligible	51.35	7
Average rural student-to-teacher ratio	9.9	48
Percentage of rural teachers using computers in class	80.0%	45
Percentage of rural expenditures on school administration costs, difference from median	0.4%	27
Rural per capita income	$20,268	31
Percentage of rural teachers reporting parental support	72.6%	48
Percentage of rural expenditures on transportation	4.4%	24
Percentage of rural expenditures on instruction and pupil support	58.8%	26
Average number of students per grade	20.7	45
Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%,1996-2000	47.3%	8

* A rank of 1 is most urgent

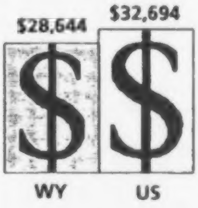
Percentage of public schools in rural areas



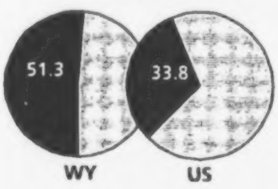
Percentage of all students attending small rural schools



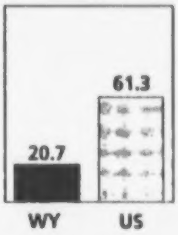
Average rural teacher's salary



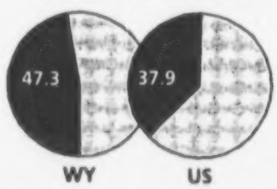
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch



Average number of students per grade



Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%, 1996-2000

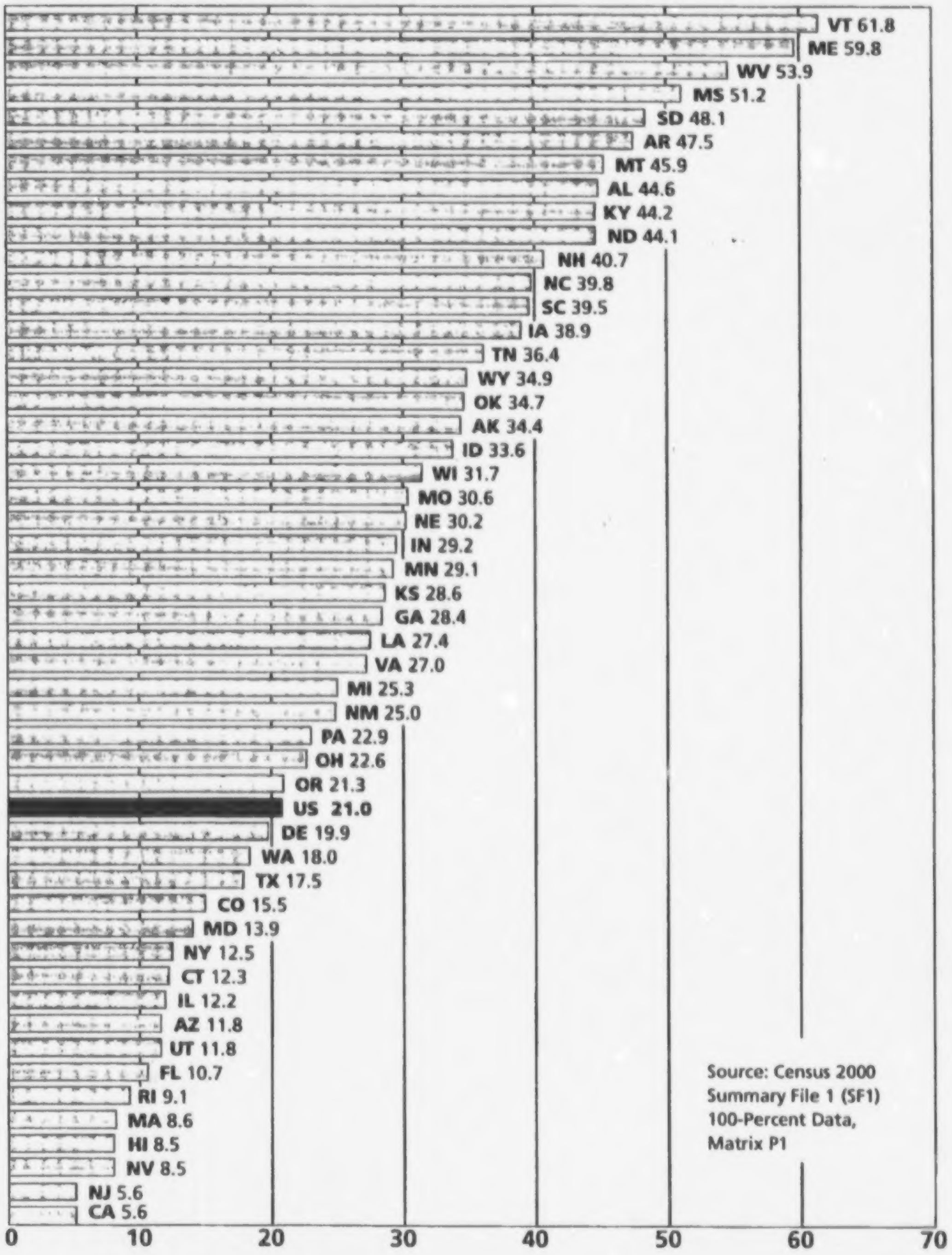


IMPORTANCE INDICATORS

State-by-State Comparisons

PERCENTAGE OF STATE'S POPULATION THAT IS RURAL

The percentage of people living in places with 2,500 or fewer
and/or as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau



Source: Census 2000
Summary File 1 (SF1)
100-Percent Data,
Matrix P1

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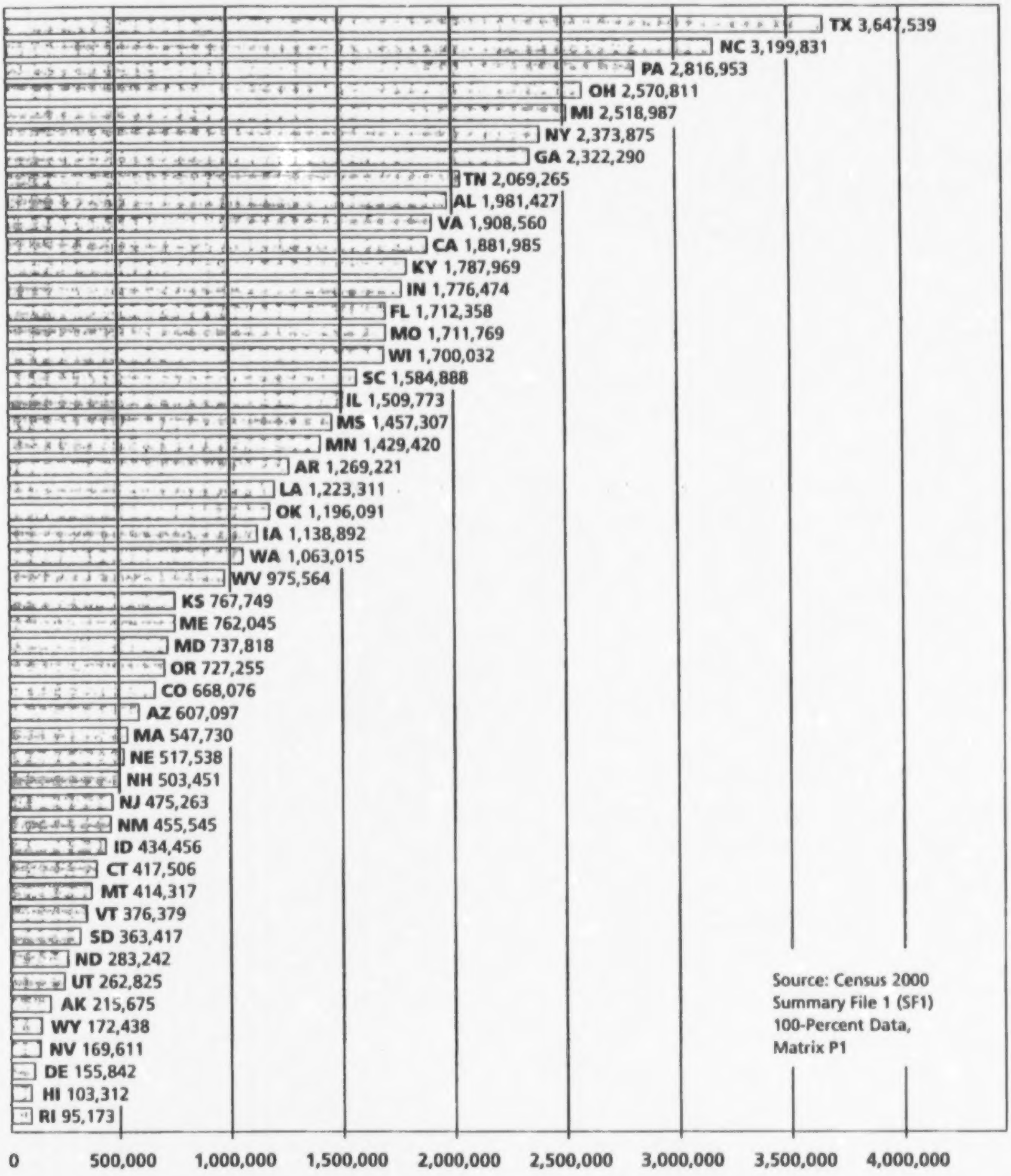
NUMBER OF RURAL PEOPLE

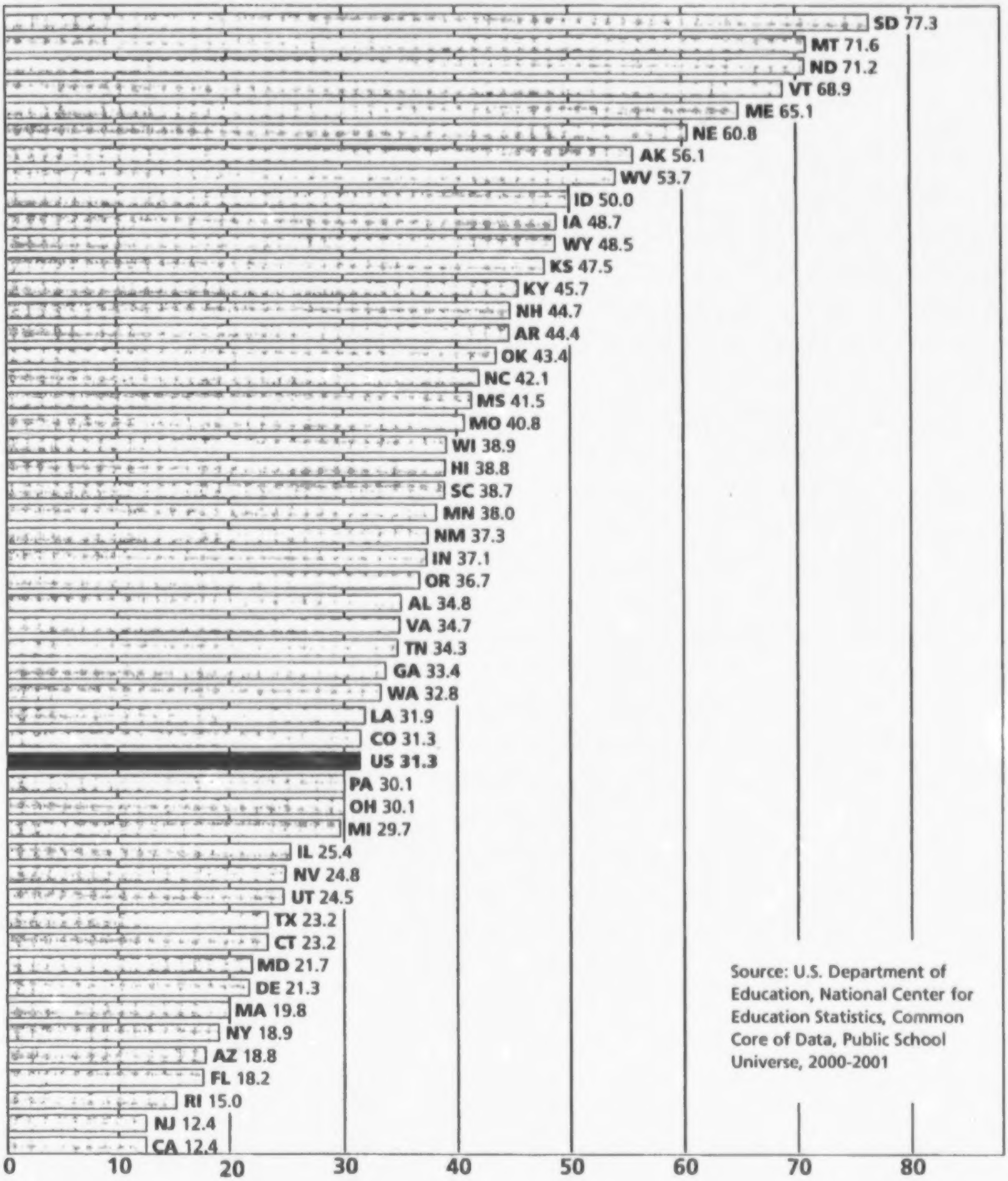
The number of people living in places with 2,500 or fewer
and/or as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau



Source: Census 2000
Summary File 1 (SF1)
100-Percent Data,
Matrix P1

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS

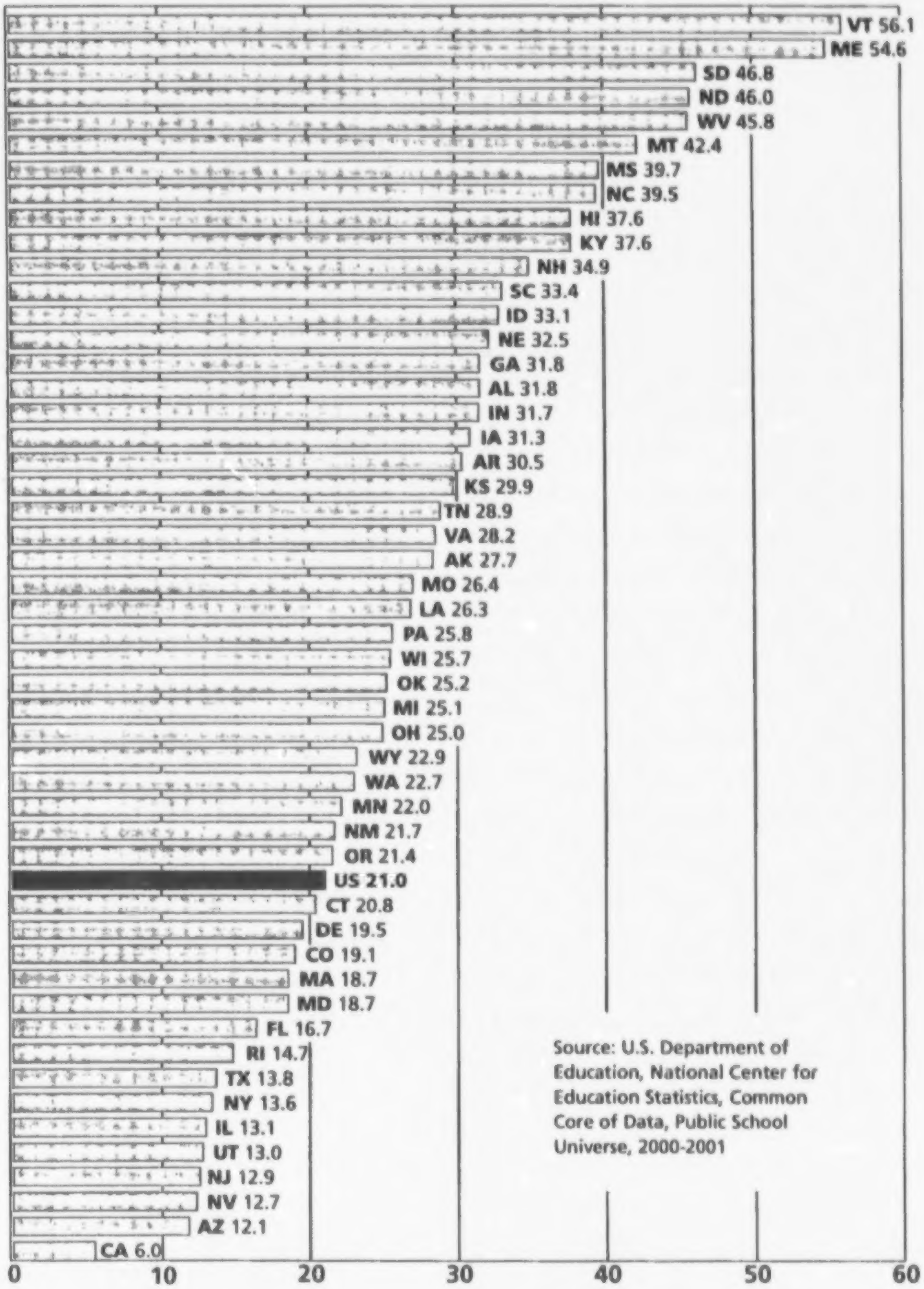
The number of regular elementary and secondary public schools
in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN RURAL SCHOOLS

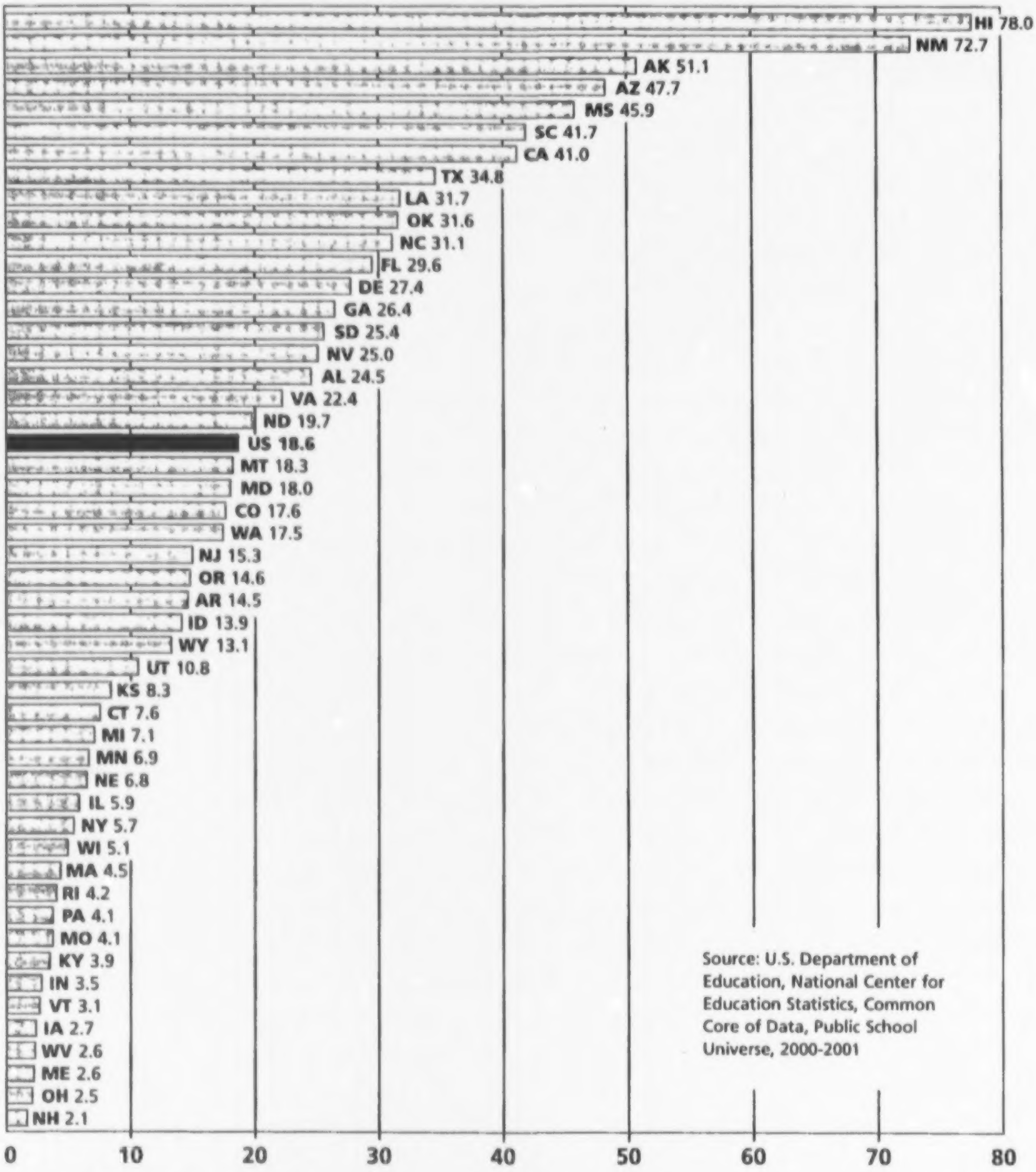
The percentage of all public school students who are enrolled in
regular elementary and secondary schools in rural areas



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL STUDENTS WHO ARE MINORITIES

The number of students in rural public schools who are minorities
as a percentage of all students in rural public schools

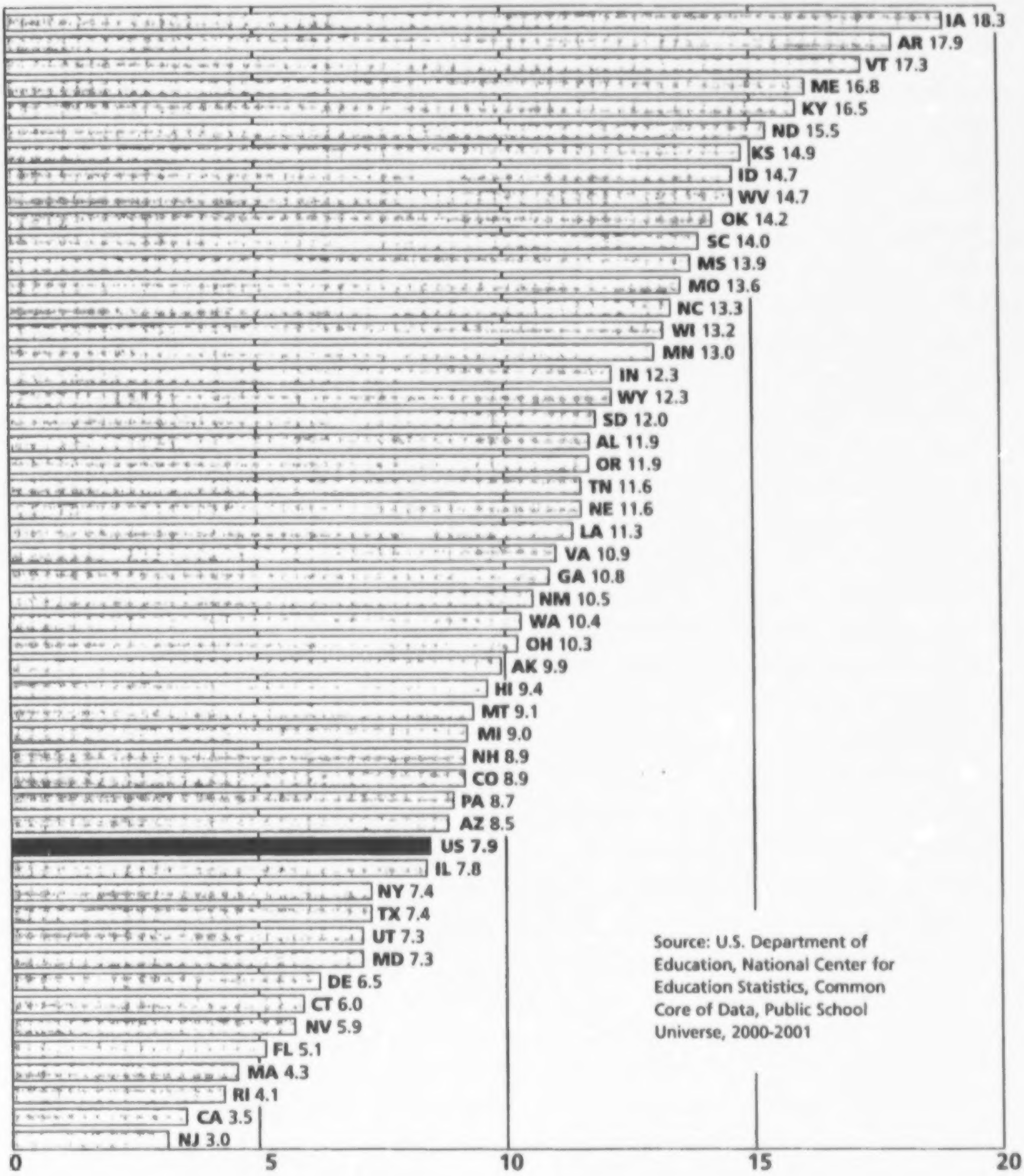


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

TN - data not available

PERCENTAGE OF ALL STUDENTS ATTENDING SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS

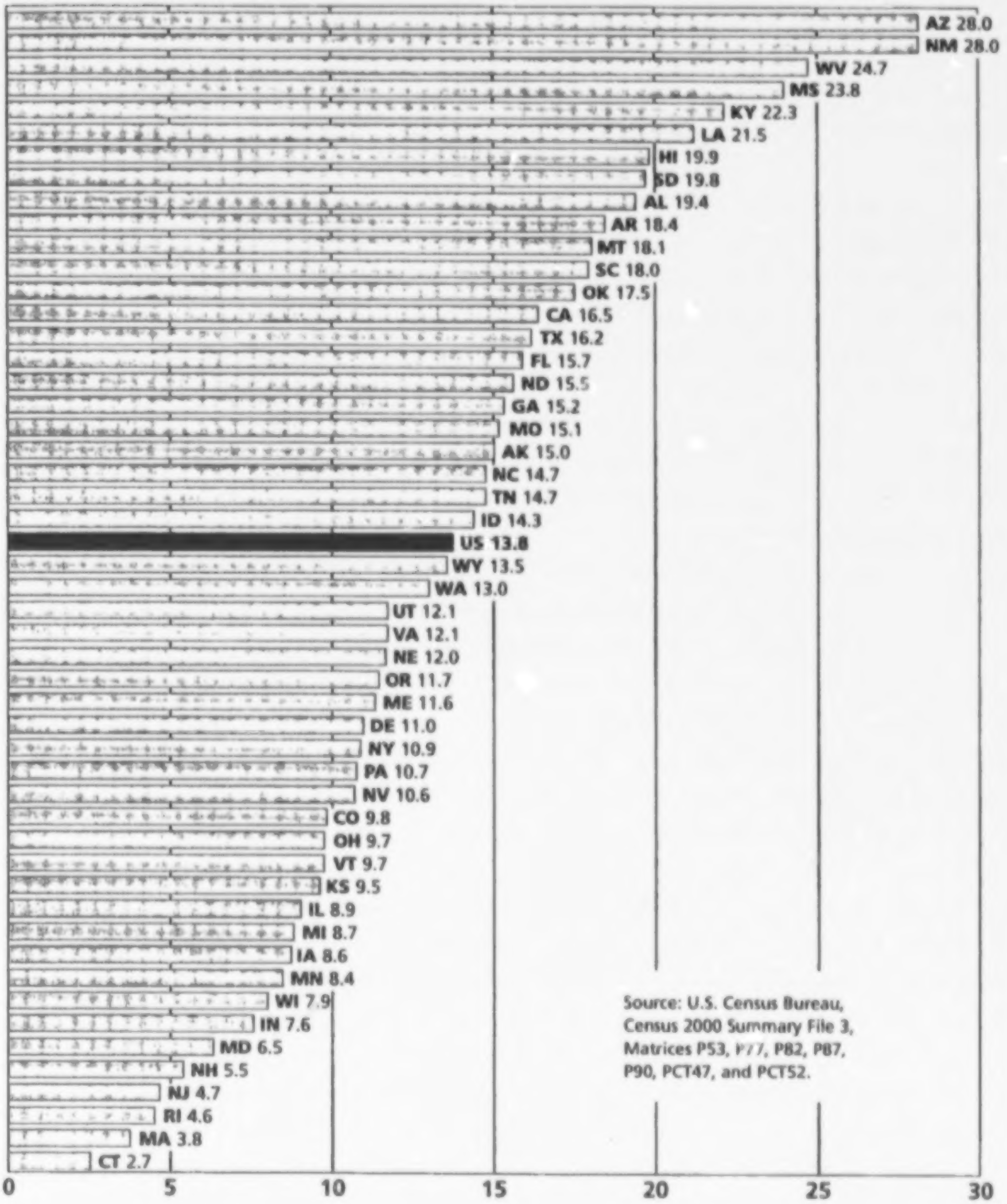
The number of students attending rural public schools with enrollments below the state median, as a percentage of all public school students in the state



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL CHILDREN IN POVERTY

The percentage of children under the age of 18 who were below the poverty level in 1999 and lived in rural places, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau



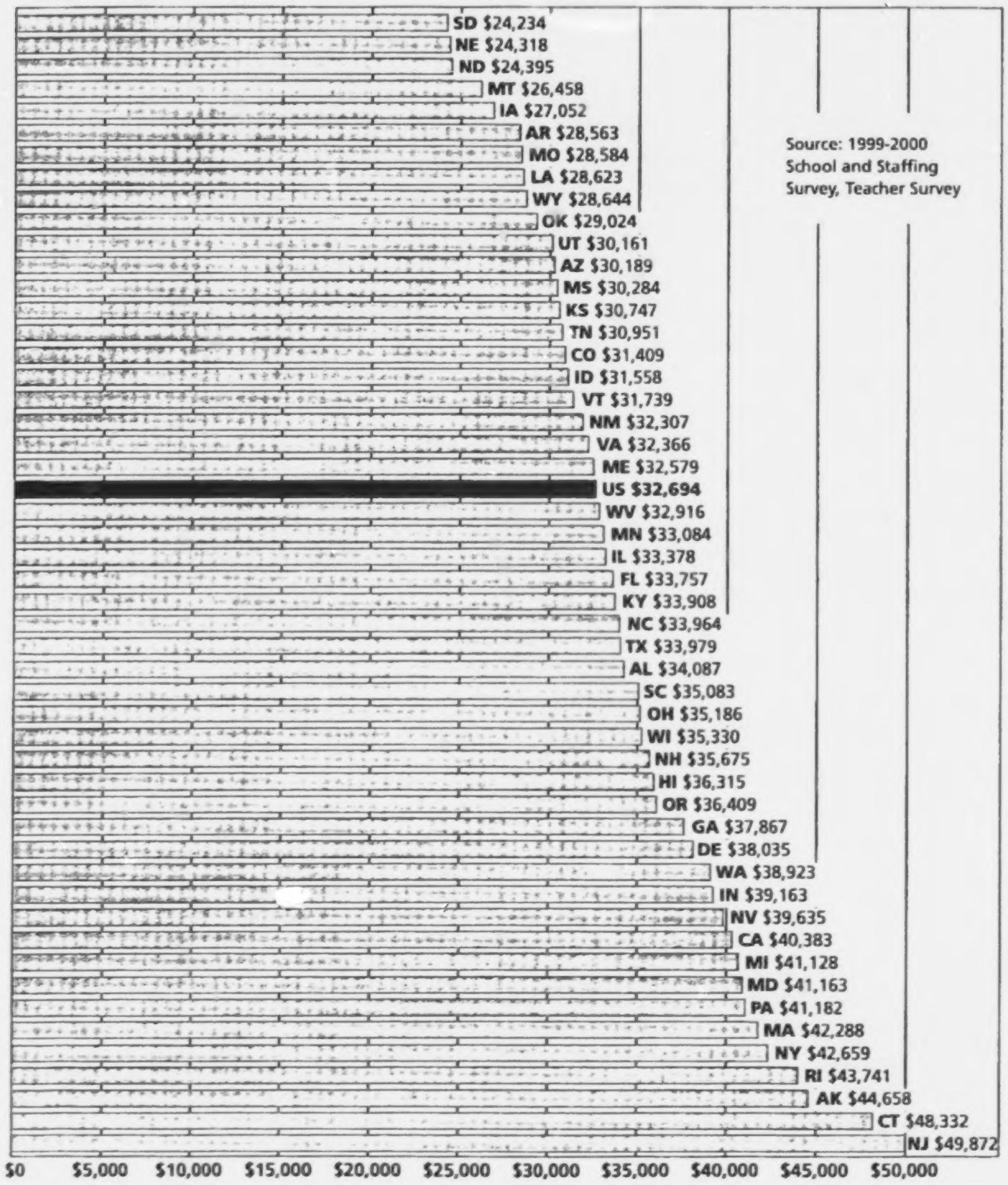
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
Census 2000 Summary File 3,
Matrices P53, P77, P82, P87,
P90, PCT47, and PCT52.

URGENCY INDICATORS

State-by-State Comparisons

AVERAGE RURAL TEACHER'S SALARY

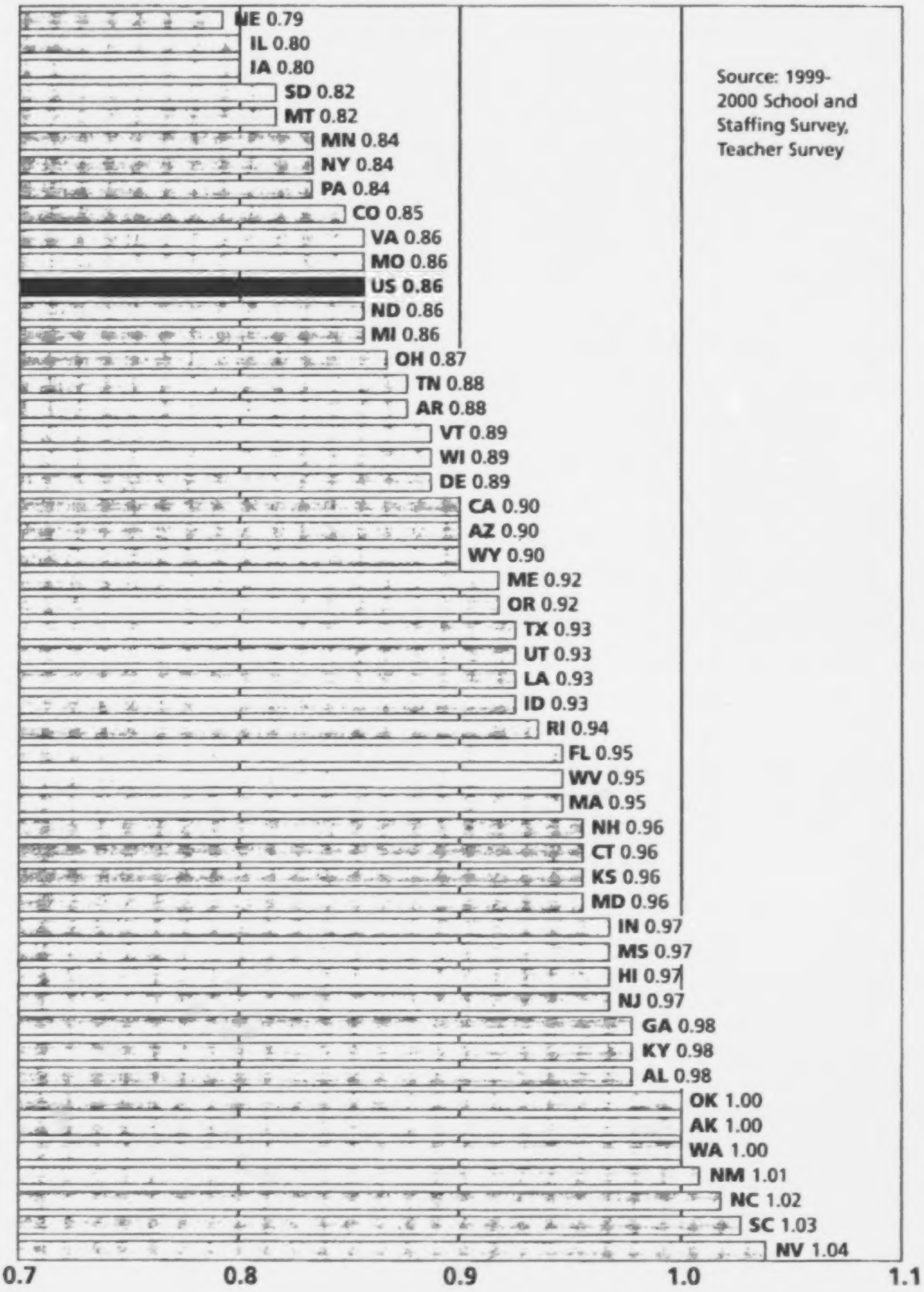
The average salary for teachers in
rural public elementary and secondary schools



Source: 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Survey

RATIO OF RURAL TO NON-RURAL TEACHER SALARY

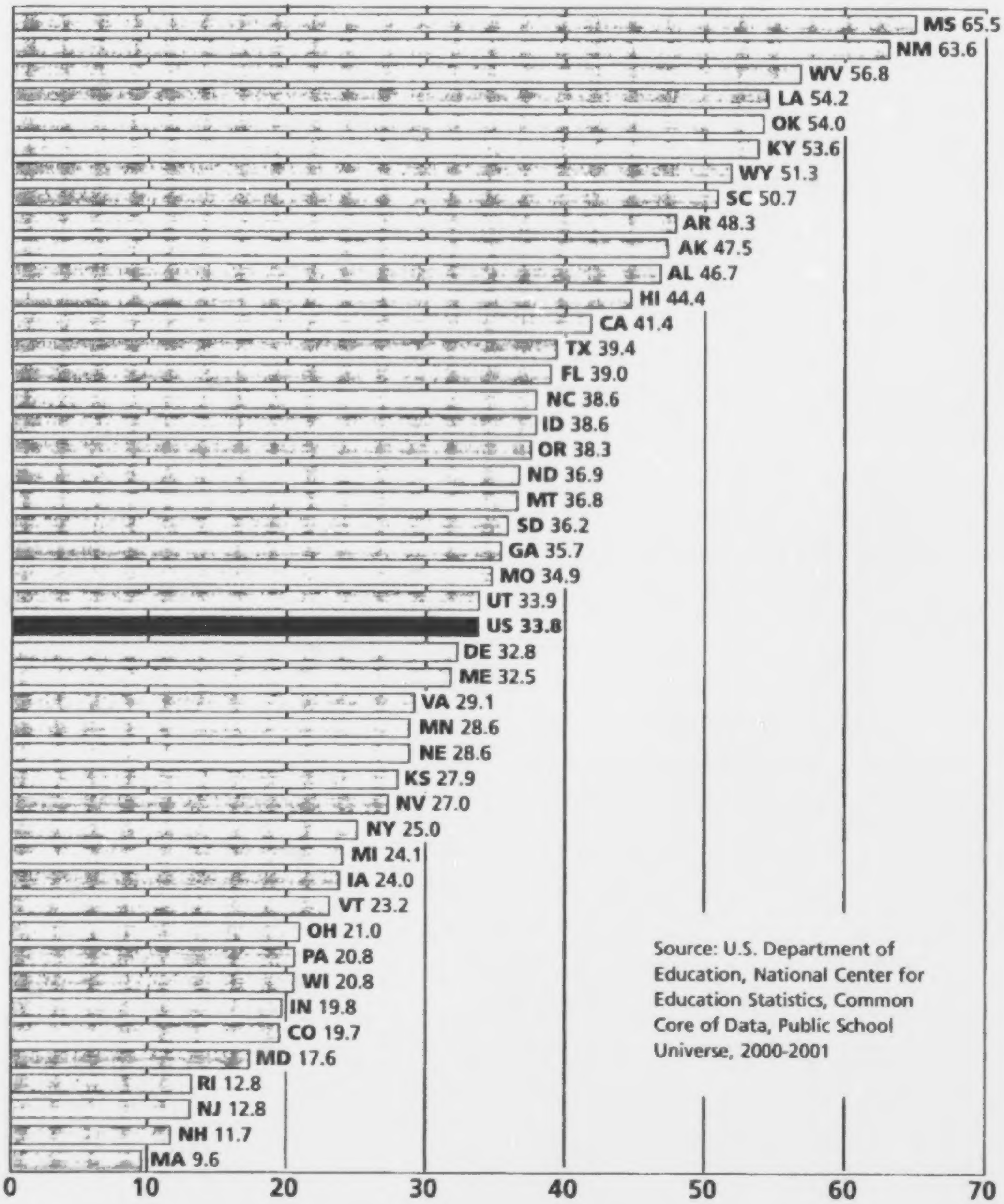
The ratio of the average rural teacher salary to the average non-rural teacher salary



Source: 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Survey

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL STUDENTS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

The percentage of students in regular rural public elementary and secondary schools who are eligible for free and reduced lunch programs

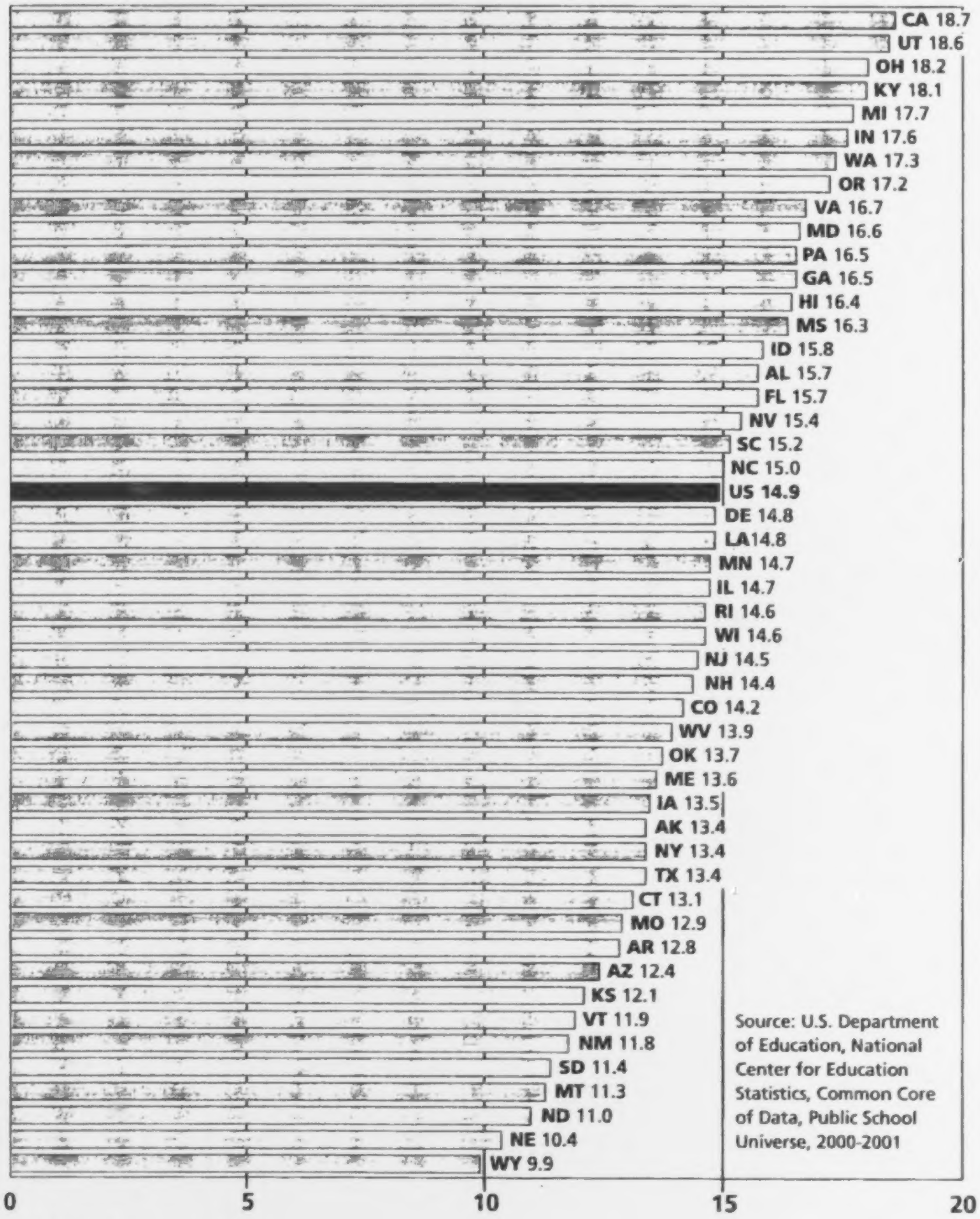


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

AZ, CT, IL, TN, WA - Data not available

AVERAGE RURAL STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIO

The average ratio of students to teachers in
regular rural public elementary and secondary schools

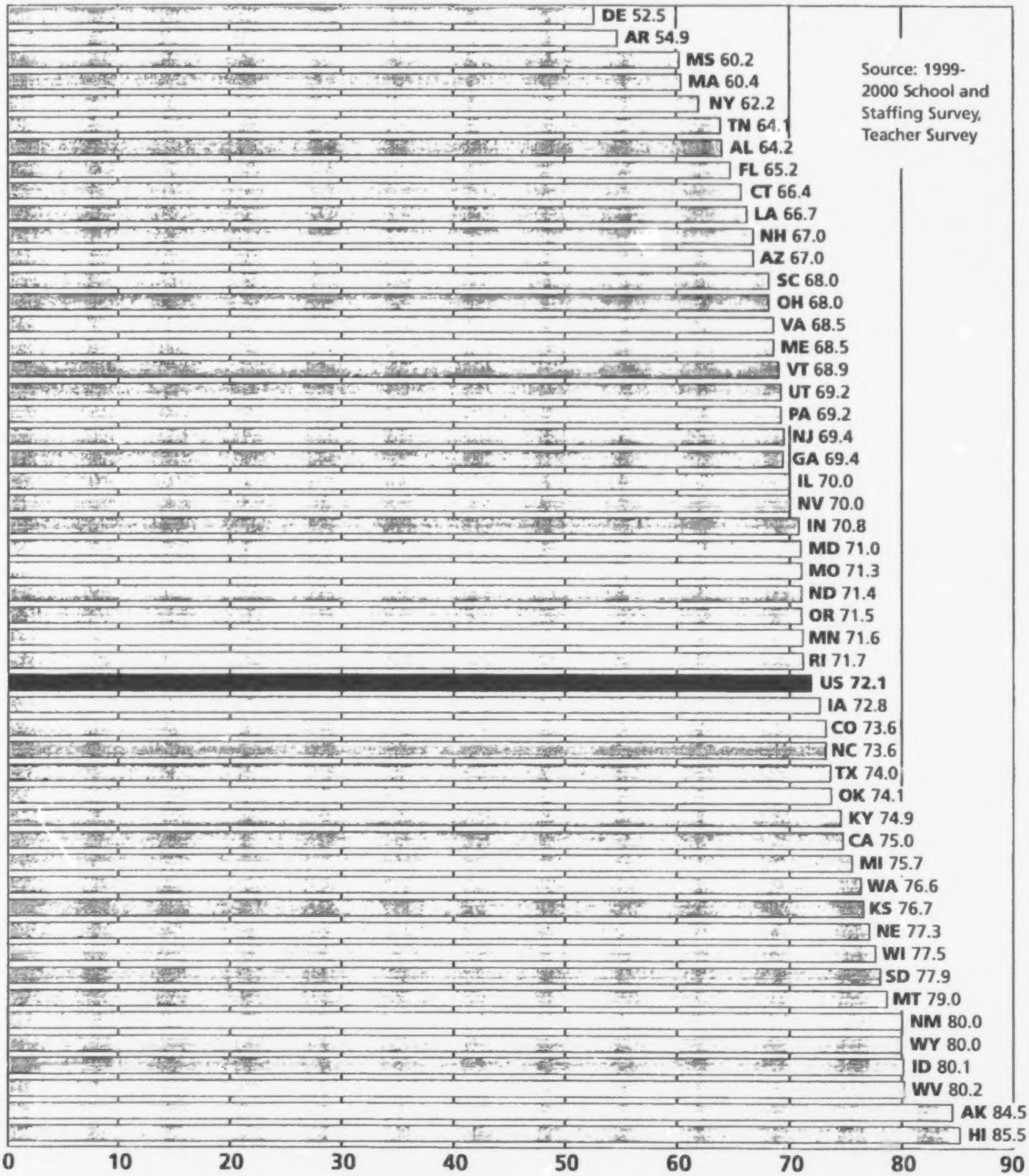


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

MA, TN - Data not available

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL TEACHERS USING COMPUTERS IN CLASS

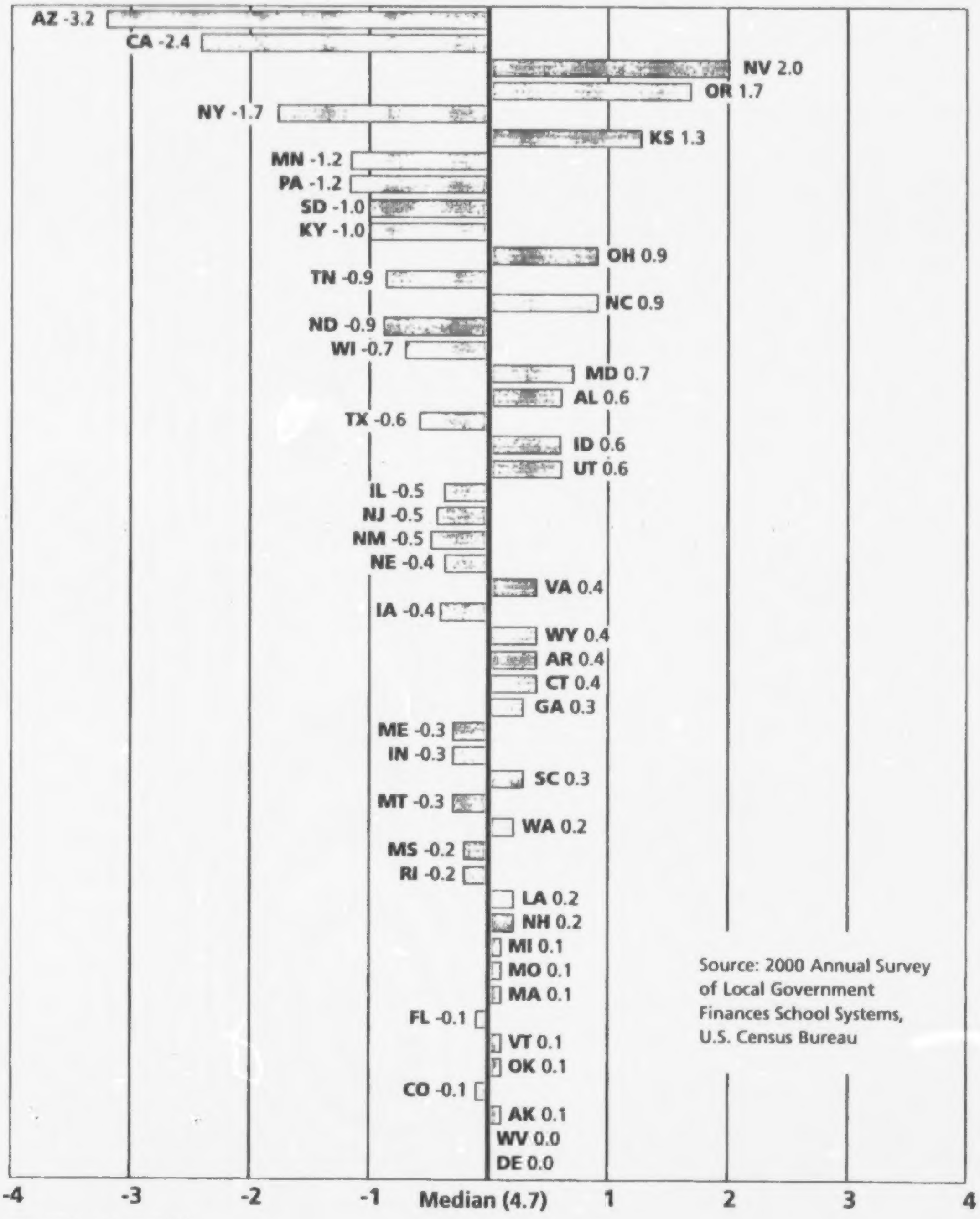
The percentage of rural teachers who report that students use computers during class time



Source: 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Survey

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL EXPENDITURES ON SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The average percentage of rural district expenditures for school administration expressed as the absolute difference from the median average national expenditure for rural school administration

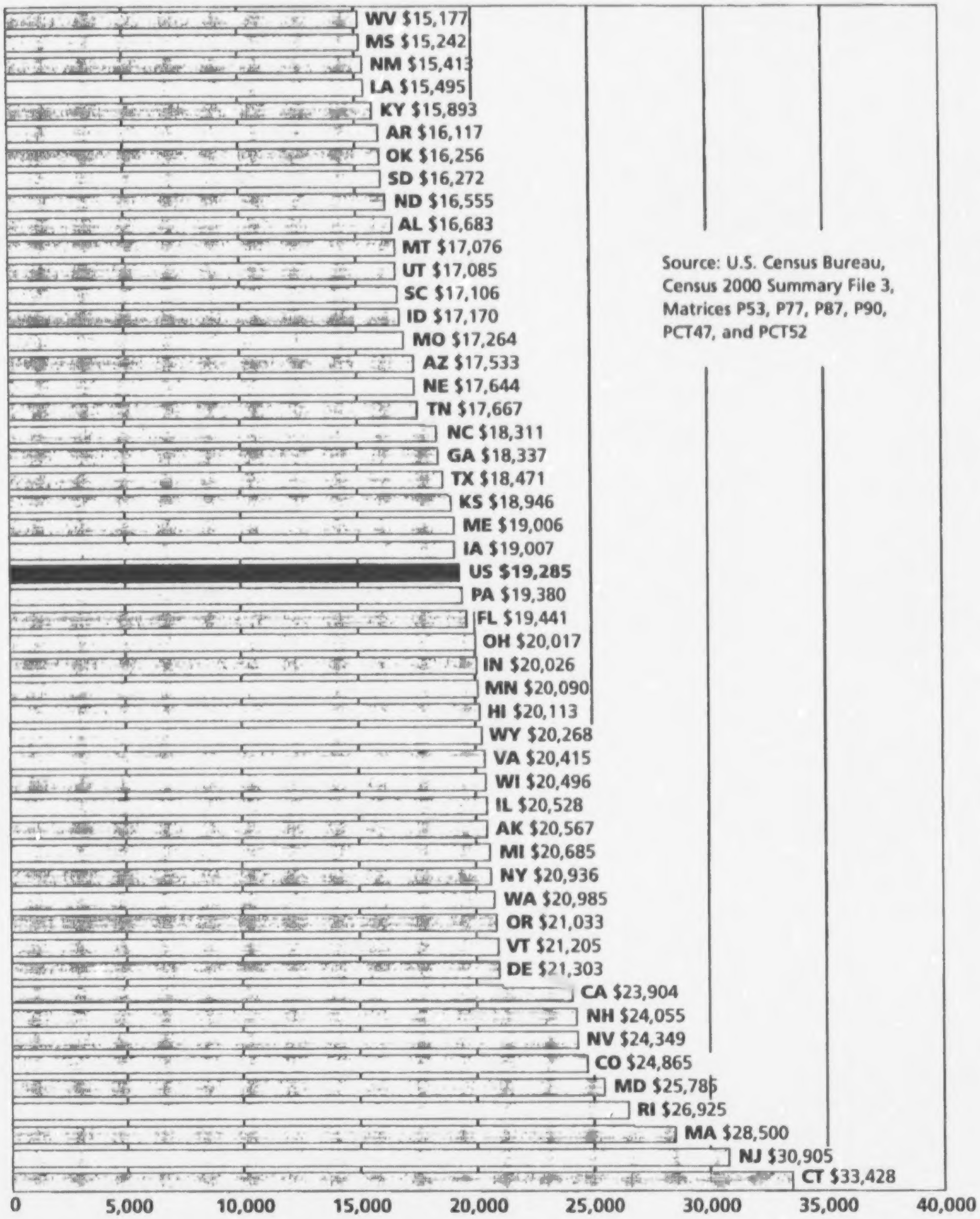


Source: 2000 Annual Survey of Local Government Finances School Systems, U.S. Census Bureau

HI - Data not available

RURAL PER CAPITA INCOME

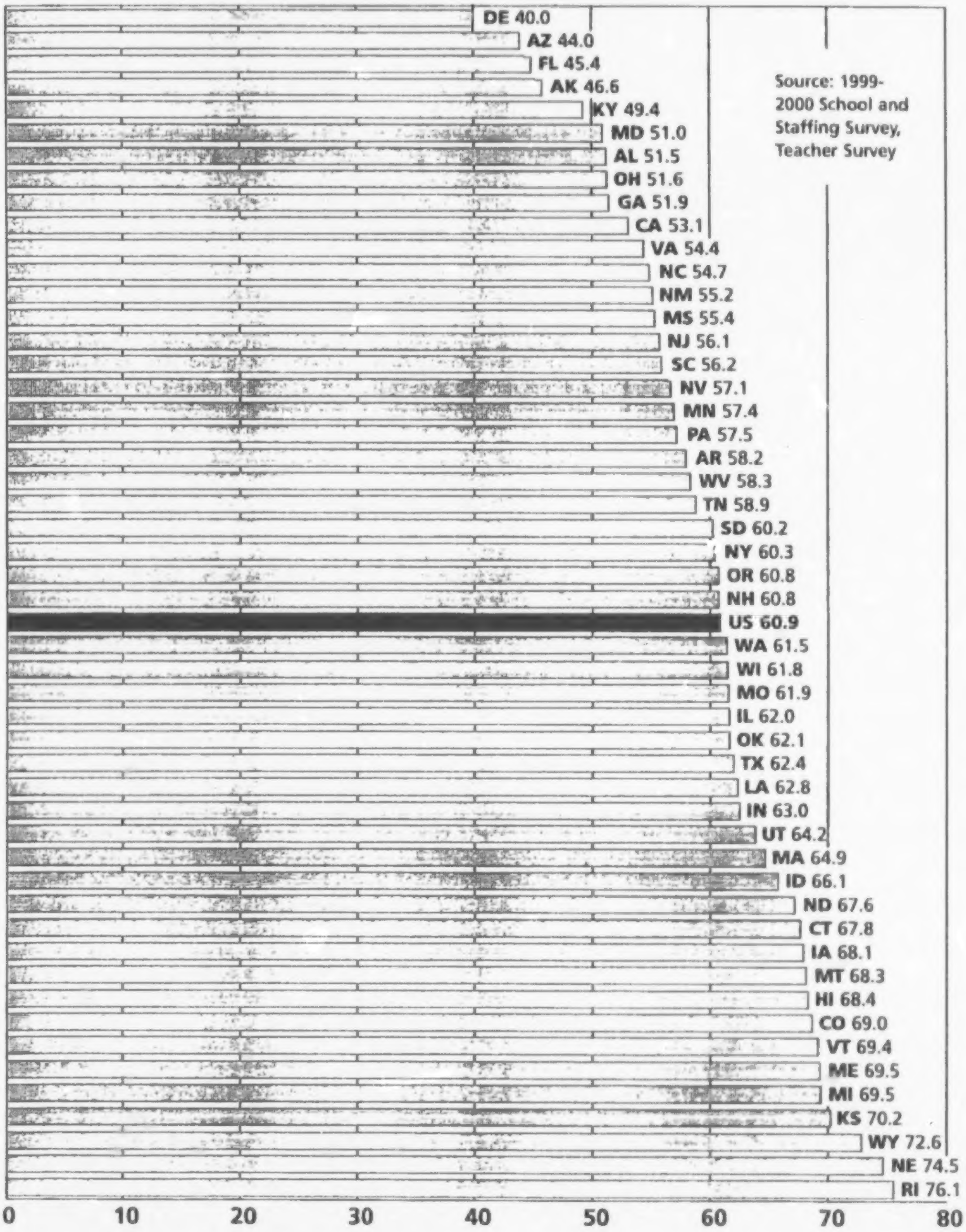
The rural per capita income by state



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P53, P77, P87, P90, PCT47, and PCT52

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL TEACHERS REPORTING PARENTAL SUPPORT

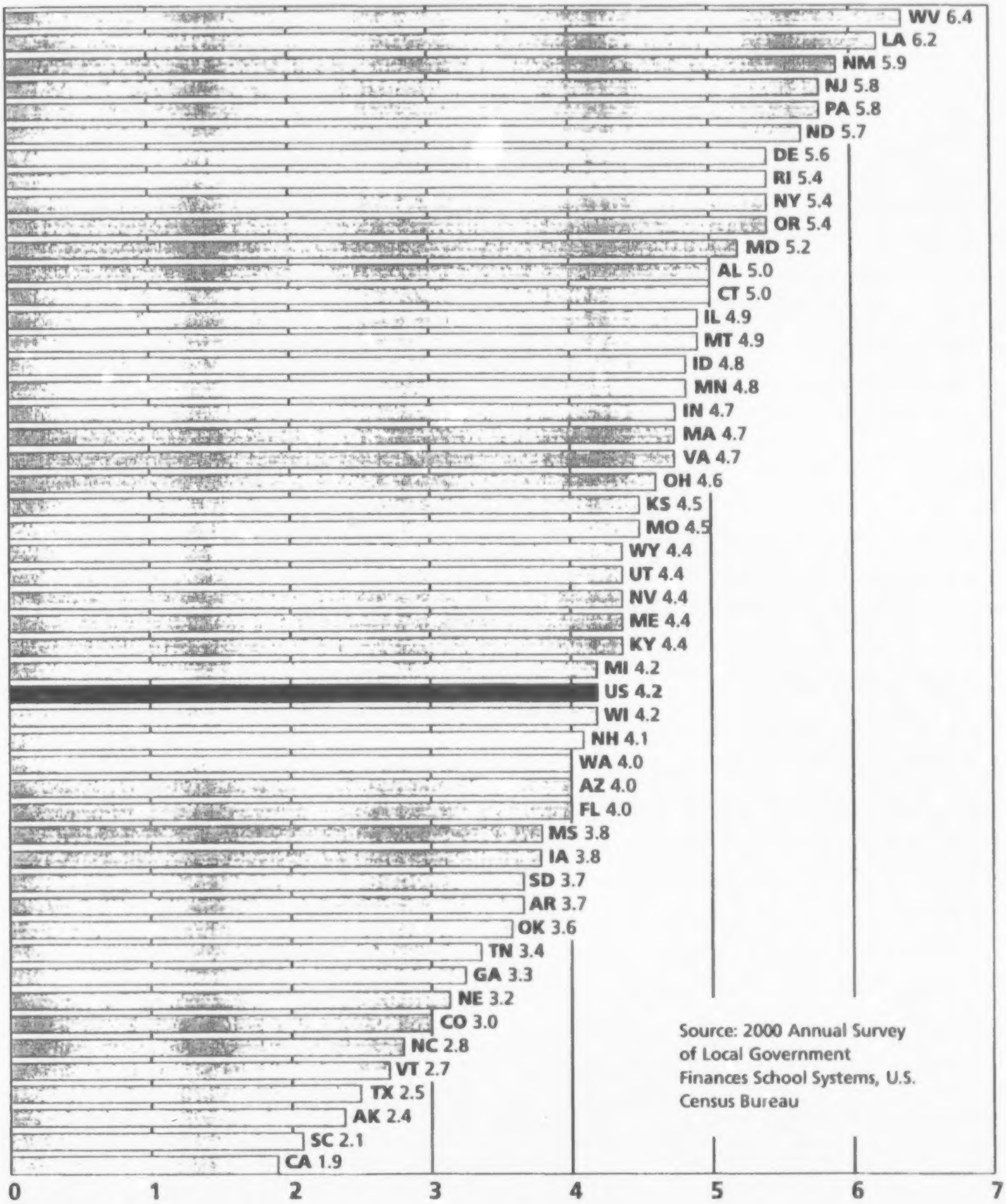
Percentage of rural teachers who strongly or somewhat strongly agree with the statement, "I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do."



Source: 1999-2000 School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Survey

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL EXPENDITURES ON TRANSPORTATION

Total expenditures for vehicle operation, monitoring riders, and vehicle servicing and maintenance, as a percentage of total elementary-secondary spending in rural districts

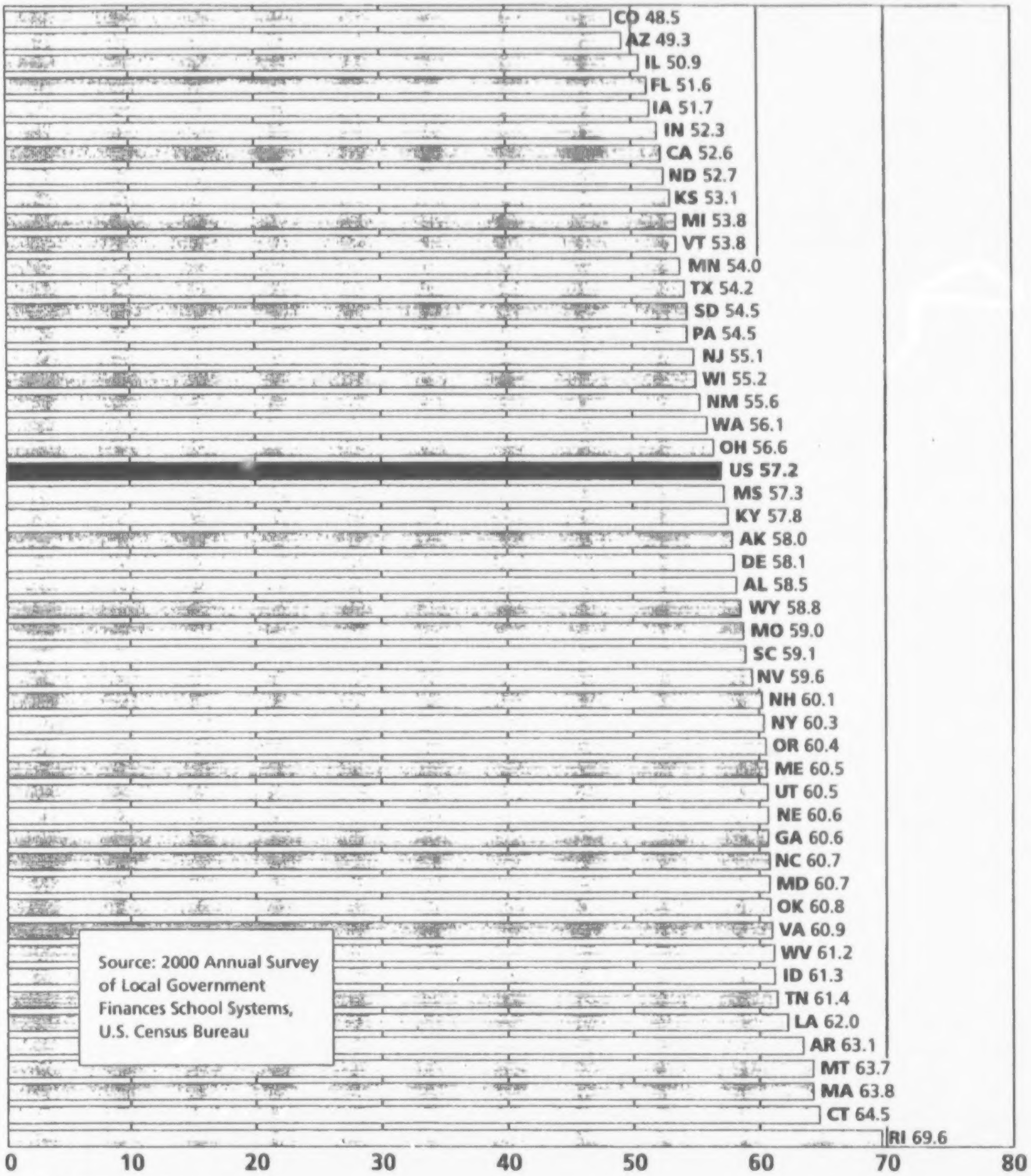


Source: 2000 Annual Survey of Local Government Finances School Systems, U.S. Census Bureau

HI: Data not available

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL EXPENDITURES ON INSTRUCTION AND PUPIL SUPPORT

Total rural current expenditure for activities dealing with the interaction of teachers and students in the classroom, plus total expenditures for pupil support as a percentage of total elementary-secondary spending.

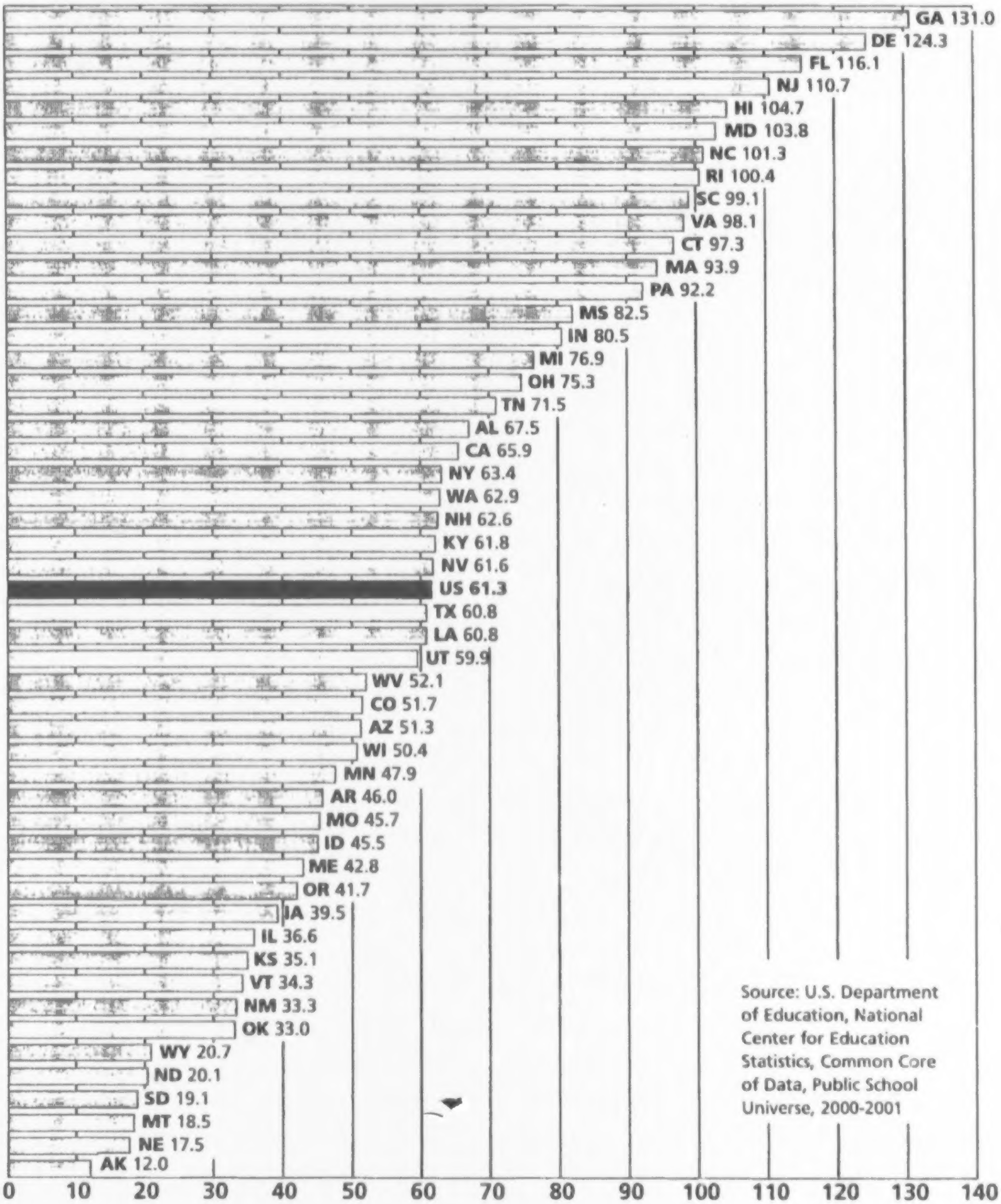


Source: 2000 Annual Survey of Local Government Finances School Systems, U.S. Census Bureau

HI: Data not available

AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER GRADE

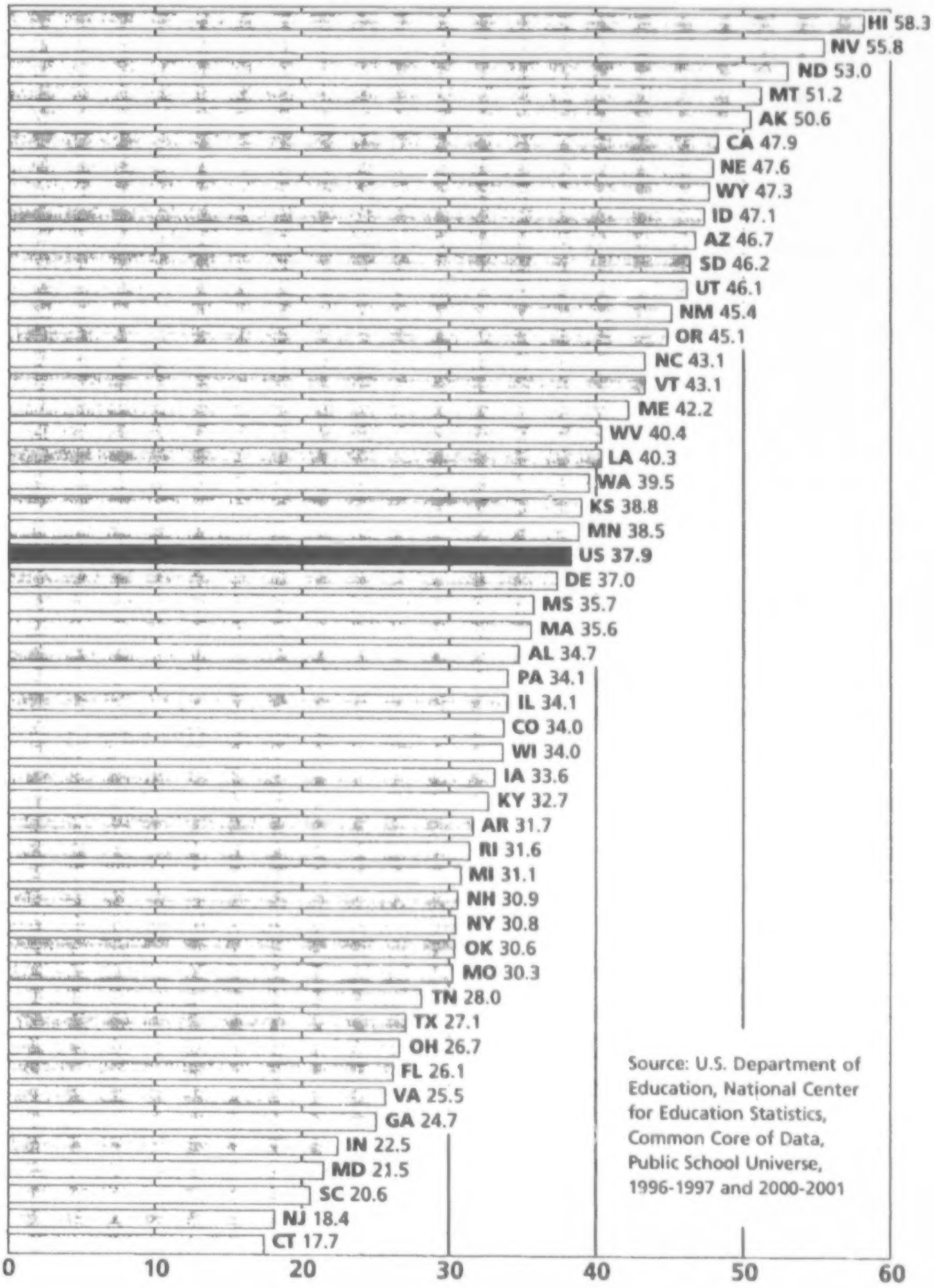
A ratio of the average number of rural students in rural public schools to the average number of grades in rural public schools



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2000-2001

PERCENTAGE OF RURAL SCHOOLS WITH DECLINING ENROLLMENTS

The percentage of rural public elementary and secondary schools that have declines in enrollment of at least 10% between the school years 1996 and 2000



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1996-1997 and 2000-2001

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EFF-089 (1/2003)